

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND WELSH HISTORY

**THE LIVES OF WOMEN IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND AND THE
OTTOMAN EMPIRE**

FAAEZA ADAMJI JASDANWALLA

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF PhD**

ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY

2007

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Date...17...December 2007...

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Date...17...December 2007...

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Date...17...December 2007...

SUMMARY

The focus of this doctoral thesis is a study of the lives, roles and status of women in early modern England and the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period. In an attempt at investigating the position that women enjoyed in the early modern period, the study focuses on women's status in the religious, political, social, artistic and literary spheres. The thesis concludes with an analysis of all of the above information, resulting in the parallels that can be drawn between the two cultures as regards women and gender issues. An attempt is made at investigating possible causes for the similarities as well as the differences; the extent to which these can be attributed to biased or inaccurate accounts, as well as the extent to which these similarities and distinctions are based on religious doctrines and/or cultural influences. The study also aims to assess women's participation in the male-dominated public sphere essentially from within their relegated private sphere.

My contribution to the study of women's history in both historical regions therefore is to provide a comparative element. Instead of exploring a certain aspect of English or Ottoman women's history separately, I endeavour to study the existing information cross-culturally with the intention of picking out not only the dissimilarities between English and Ottoman women's lives but also try to determine common ground between the two cultures, in an attempt at presenting a more holistic understanding of women's experiences. Although Anglo-Ottoman relations have hitherto been researched in political, commercial, economic and cultural terms, it has largely been male-focused. This study therefore, attempts to examine Anglo-Ottoman relations and perceptions with women as their focus, looking at both English male perceptions and opinions of Ottoman women, and English women's first-hand accounts and interactions with Ottoman women. These perceptions and interactions will then further be discussed along with the independent studies of Ottoman women based on Ottoman archives so as to try and determine the reliability of some of these perceptions and accounts. This results in the question of whether the actual practise of women's roles coincided with their normative position and status in the Bible and the Qur'an. This issue therefore forms an important part of the investigation and analysis of English and Ottoman women's social roles.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to my parents without whose determination, consistent support and sacrifice I would not have had the confidence to undertake such an endeavour. Equally, I acknowledge the encouragement and help I received unstintingly from my brother and sister-in-law, and take this opportunity to convey my heartfelt appreciation and thanks. Similarly, I recognise the encouragement I have received constantly from all my family members. I am particularly thankful for the immense cheer brought by my niece to days which seemed cloudy.

My special thanks go to all my friends in Bombay as well as all those treasured friends I made during my research years in Aberystwyth, who spurred me onwards and upwards and ensured that my motivation never flagged – it would have been difficult to reach this stage without the injections of strength they administered as and when needed – a big ‘shukriya’ to one and all.

My heartfelt thanks, gratitude and appreciation go to Professor Richard Rathbone whose supervision and assistance has not only been crucial to this thesis, but whose encouragement and true friendship has renewed my confidence. My special thanks are extended to my second supervisor and friend, Dr. Karen Stöber for her guidance, and to Professor Phillipp Schofield for his support and advice, as well as to the administrative staff of the Department of History and Welsh History, particularly Delyth Flecher and Awen Dafydd.

INTRODUCTION

This study has been inspired by Nabil Matar's book *Islam in Britain* and the intercultural influences that affected England and the Islamic world in the early modern period.¹ While Matar's study, based on literary sources, focuses on broadly Anglo-Ottoman relations in general, this study will look at a comparison of women's lives in both historical regions from roughly the early sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries. Because of the limits of such an investigation and personal interests, this broad examination will be contained within women's religious and social obligations and their visibility and involvement in the public sphere of politics, the arts and literature. As one can appreciate, discussing every facet of women's lives and participation within it is neither conducive to the scope of a doctoral thesis nor a realistic aspiration. On account of the vastness and variety and complexity of the ethnic population that incorporated the Ottoman Empire, this study will focus primarily on Istanbul and its neighbouring regions. Personal constraints together with the extensiveness of available material on women's history particularly on the English side have restricted the examination of sources to secondary, and abundant printed primary material.

The eminent Ottoman historian Suraiya Faroqhi in *Approaching Ottoman History* suggests that a comparative study of the Ottoman Empire is often undertaken with the aim of highlighting the distinctive features of Ottoman history.² While that will undoubtedly be a part of my aim, I also propose to bring to light the differences as well as the many similarities that existed in the two cultures which were often imagined as entirely distinctive from each other.

1) Brief Historical Background:-

The time span chosen for this study is roughly from the 1520's to the 1720's. The primary reason for this choice is that the 1520's mark the initial years of Süleyman I's reign, which was also the period when the Imperial Harem under

¹ Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain, 1558-1685* (Cambridge, 1998).

² Suraiya Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History: an introduction to the sources* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 4.

Süleyman I's favourite concubine (later wife) Hürrem Sultan came to the fore. Thereafter, the Imperial Harem remained in prominence until the death of the *valide sultan* (mother of the reigning sultan) Turhan in 1687. In the English context, the 1520's also marked the beginnings of the Reformation in England and witnessed the political and religious circumstances that affected the lives and later succession of the two sixteenth-century queens of England, Mary I and Elizabeth I, while the seventeenth century not only heralded the turmoil of the Civil War, which resulted in women's greater visibility in the public sphere, but also saw the reigns of two more queens, Mary II and Anne. The 1720's therefore is chosen as broadly the end of the time span of this investigation as 1714 marks the end of Queen Anne's reign, while 1718 brings to an end Lady Wortley Montagu's visit to Istanbul as the wife of the then English ambassador, Edward Montagu. Although a broad time frame, I believe that this span is necessary for an effective investigation and better understanding of women's lives, particularly keeping in mind the comparative approach.

A brief account of events that shaped the history of the two regions under study will be useful at the outset as it will help to frame the background for not only the separate discussion of women in each culture within the specified time frame, but also aid in the understanding of Anglo-Ottoman relations, both commercially and culturally.

The Reformation was one of the most momentous historical events in the first half of the sixteenth century in England. It not only resulted in the introduction and spread of Protestantism but also led to the dissolution of the monasteries and nunneries by Henry VIII (1509-1547). The split from Rome and the shift from reliance on priests to individual responsibility meant that both men and women were individually answerable to God for their actions because of the de-emphasis on confession and on priests as intermediaries between the laity and God. On the political front, the first half of the sixteenth century was wrought with problems of succession after Henry VIII's death and the shifting religious affinities of the three succeeding monarchs, Edward VI (1547-53), Mary Tudor (1553-58) and Elizabeth I (1558-1603). In relation to the current study, the most significant development of the sixteenth century in England

was that two of the three monarchs that consecutively succeeded Henry VIII were women. In addition to trying to prove themselves as capable female monarchs, Mary I and Elizabeth I also asserted their respective religious faiths on a nascent though ever-increasing Protestant population at logger-heads with their Catholic neighbours.

In the East, the Islamic empire of the Ottomans had gained prominence, particularly since their conquest of Constantinople in 1453. It thereafter went on to dominate not only the Middle Eastern region, but also Eastern Europe as far as former Yugoslavia, Hungary and North Africa, under Emperors such as Mehmed II (1451-81), Bayezid II (1481-1512), Selim I (1512-20), Süleyman I (1520-66), Selim II (1566-74), Murad III (1574-95) and Mehmed III (1595-1603).³ This vast expansive power gave cause for concern among its neighbours. Therefore, forming commercial relations with the Turks who had a vast network of trade links seemed a prudent policy, a policy soon adopted by Elizabeth I. The Ottoman Sultan, Murad III (1574-95) had granted trading rights to the English Levant Company founded in 1581. The initial correspondence between William Harborne, later the first English ambassador to Istanbul, and the Ottoman translator Mustafa Chiaus was largely responsible for the establishment of Anglo-Ottoman trade links. As Susan Skilliter notes, 'if one can call Harborne the builder of the alliance then Mustafa is its architect'.⁴ This resulted in a steady stream of English ambassadors in the 'Sublime Porte' for the next two centuries and a continuance of an increasing number of merchants and travellers. Not less significant (particularly with regard to this investigation), was the swift rise in power of the women of the Imperial Harem, beginning with Süleyman's wife, Hurrem (as noted above), and growing from strength to strength with the authority of the mothers of the reigning sultans or *valide sultans*. These harem women, as will be demonstrated, not only took maximum advantage of their

³ See Chronology of Ottoman History, 1260-1923' in Halil Inalcik, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, Volume One, 1300-1600* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. xv-xxi or see Appendix below for the Ottoman family tree.

⁴ For a brief history of Anglo-Turkish relations see S.A. Skilliter, *William Harborne and the Trade with Turkey, 1578-1582: A Democracy Study of the First Anglo-Ottoman Relations* (London, 1977), p. 43. Also see N.M. Penzer, *The Harem, as it Existed in the Palace of the Turkish Sultans with a History of the Grand Seraglio From its Foundation to Modern Times* (London, 1965), p. 31.

relationship with the Sultan, but also played significant roles in governmental policies and diplomacy.

Turbulent times occurred in both regions during the first half of the seventeenth century. The reign of James I, with his emphasis on the divine rights of kings was followed by that of Charles I in which the friction between the king and Parliament culminated in the Civil War in the 1640's, ending eventually in regicide in 1649. The Interregnum which ensued, saw Oliver Cromwell as the head of the Commonwealth. The turmoil of the Wars had in many cases, placed a greater responsibility on women in the absence of their husbands in the battlefield, and the partisan sentiment of the time, also prompted women to express their opinions in support, or in criticism of the royalists or parliamentarians. It was the period of the Civil War and Interregnum therefore, which witnessed women's notable visibility in public activities, in terms of greater participation in church government, an increased public voice through literary activities and an enhanced awareness and demand for their rights through Parliamentary petitions. The Commonwealth came to an end with the Restoration of monarchy in 1660 with Charles II. The unpopular accession of his brother, the Catholic James II in 1685 was the cause of the Revolution of 1688 which replaced him with the Protestant Dutch King, William III of Orange (1688-1702) and his English wife Mary (daughter of James II) on the throne of England. Their reign was followed by that of Mary's sister Anne (1702-14), who unlike her sister did not share joint powers of rule with her husband. The Bill of Rights of 1689 had placed limitations on the absolute powers of the monarch, the implementation of which Anne at times resisted. Therefore, in the span of a century and a half, England had witnessed the rules of four female monarchs and this study will, therefore, endeavour to observe the manner in which all four queens regnant exercised their powers effectively in the largely male-dominated public sphere of politics.

On the Ottoman side, the death of Sultan Ahmed I in 1617 had initiated the revival of the strength and influence of the Imperial Harem in the politics of the Empire. The accession to the throne of successive incompetent or under-aged sultans bolstered the authority of their mothers who acted on their behalf

on matters of government along with the Grand Vizier and other notable officials. Factionalism and intrigue within the harem spiralled in the 1640's eventually resulting in the murder of the *valide sultan* Kösem in 1651. The power of the harem declined after the death of Kösem's successor, the *valide sultan* Turhan in 1687. The offensive policy of conquest that had been followed by the sultans until the end of the sixteenth century had largely given way to passivity or debauchery on the part of the sultans, making offensive campaigns less frequent than during the reigns of their fifteenth and sixteenth century predecessors. The peaceful reign of Ahmet III (1703-30) had encouraged an increased patronage of the arts and literature as well as a relaxation of some of the restrictions that had marked Ottoman society for centuries such as those on the movement of women in public. This progressive and fashionable period known as the 'Tulip era' was initiated by the Grand Vizier Nev Şehherli Ibrahim Paşa (1718-30) and witnessed a greater integration of western influences within Ottoman society. Although, apart from the visit of the Turkish ambassador Mustafa, to England at the court of James I in 1607, few Turkish emissaries visited England; the regular visits of English merchants and diplomats to the 'Sublime Porte' ensured the continuance of this Anglo-Ottoman exchange.⁵ Although many of the English visitors to Istanbul during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries wrote about Ottoman women, their narratives (which form part of the source base for this study) were largely based on hearsay. Penning an eyewitness account of Ottoman women was impossible for foreign men who were not permitted access within the segregated walls of the harem. Therefore, when Lady Mary Wortley Montagu resided in Turkey between 1717 and 1718, in her capacity as the English ambassador's wife, her first-hand accounts of women in the form of letters to family members and friends was invaluable, as it presented a detailed picture of women and the harem through the keen perception of a foreign woman, fascinated by Turkish life and customs. Lady Montagu's insights are therefore important to the discussion of Ottoman women. Although written at a time when the power of the Imperial Harem had waned,

⁵ For an account of the visit of the Turkish ambassador Mustafa, see Henry Ellis, *Original Letters illustrative of English History; including numerous royal letters: from Autographs in the British Museum and one or two other Collections*, vol. III (London, 1824), pp. 83-88.

her observations throw intriguing light on general attitudes and customs, particularly in relation to marriage and religion. It is indeed a pity that she had had no predecessor who might have added immensely to our understanding of Ottoman women at a time when the power of the Imperial Harem was at its zenith.

2) Historiography:-

A look at the historiography of both English and Ottoman women's history will help in our understanding of not only the research that has already been carried out in these fields, but also in placing this study within the current historiography. The study of Ottoman history is a relatively new field⁶ in which comparatively few historians have ventured. However, the political, social and economic aspects of the Ottoman Empire have been brought to light through recent detailed works.⁷ Historiographical trends often suggest that the study of women in many cultures received late attention and the Ottoman case is no exception. Few historians have studied Ottoman women and interest in this field has risen only very recently. This is partly because much of the source material at the historian's easy disposal is often largely androcentric. The chief areas of interest where women were concerned were mainly confined to Ottoman royal and aristocratic women, the *valide sultans*, *hasekis*,⁸ princesses and the wives of high administrative officials. Fanny Davis' *Ottoman Lady* (1986) and Leslie Peirce's *Imperial Harem* (1993) for instance, focus on women of the upper classes.⁹ Women of the lower social classes

⁶ As Donald Quateart states, the study of Ottoman history in the west commenced as an 'offshoot' of European history undertaken by historians who perceived it from the 'outside' as it were – conducting their studies through various European sources rather than indigenous Ottoman ones. Donald Quateart 'Recent Writings in Late Ottoman History' in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1 (Cambridge, February, 2003), p. 133.

⁷ Some of these works are Alan Palmer, *Decline and Fall of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1992), Halil Inalcik (ed.), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, 1997), Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman empire: the classical age, 1300-1600*: translated from the Turkish MS by Norman Itzkowitz and Colin Imber (London, 1973), Herbert Adams Gibbons, *The foundation of the Ottoman Empire: a history of the Osmanlis up to the death of Bayezid I, 1300-1403* (London, 1968), Albert Howe Lybyer, *The government of the Ottoman empire in the time of Suleiman the Magnificent* (Cambridge, 1913), Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey* (Cambridge, 1976), Wayne S. Vucinich, *The Ottoman Empire: its record and legacy* (Princeton, 1965) and John Addison, *Suleyman and the Ottoman empire* (London, 1974).

⁸ *Hasekis* were the favourite concubines of the Ottoman sultan while the *valide sultan* was the mother of the reigning monarch.

⁹ Fanny Davis, *The Ottoman Lady: A Social History from 1718 to 1918* (Connecticut, 1986).

were almost always ignored by early modern historians. Only in the past few decades has the study of Ottoman women's history gained momentum and although the balance tips in favour of information about upper class women, works devoted to the lower classes have also appeared recently, such as those by Raphaela Lewis, Godfrey Goodwin and Suraiya Faroqhi.¹⁰ According to Faroqhi, the reason for the delayed interest in women's history and achievements is partly explained by a patriarchal culture which consciously obscures female achievements and talents.¹¹

In 1975 Ronald Jennings summarized modern western opinion of Muslim women as follows:

Women have generally been considered by modern western observers to occupy a despised and servile position in the social and economic order of Islamic civilization. Arabists and anthropologists have been in accord that Muslim women were virtually the property first of their fathers or older brothers and then of their husbands, that Muslim women were not able to manage or control any of their own property and, in fact, were usually denied the inheritance to which the Koran entitled them, and that they even had no say in their marriages, into which they were sold by their fathers or guardians. From its beginning to the present day Islam has supposedly heaped indignities and scorn upon women. They are held to have been utterly unable to challenge or even question the authority of their fathers, brothers, and husbands.¹²

Women's exclusion from the public sphere (at least in theory) was seen as being in accordance with the *Hadith* that 'those who entrust power to a

¹⁰ Raphaela Lewis, *Everyday Life in Ottoman Turkey* (London, 1971), Godfrey Goodwin, *The Private World of Ottoman Women* (London, 1997) and Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan: culture and daily life in the Ottoman Empire* (London, 2000). Margaret Meriwether and Judith Tucker present theories about the absence of interest in women's history in the Middle East. Female activists of the Middle East have desired to make a fresh start without traditions of an oppressive past hounding them and therefore have found little incentive to explore the lives of their early modern counterparts. Furthermore, since Middle Eastern women's history tends to include more extensive material on elite women, the modern generation does not generally wish to focus on such exclusivist examples while simultaneously working towards a better existence equally for women from lower strata of society. See Margaret L. Meriwether and Judith E. Tucker (eds) *A Social History of Women and Gender in the Modern Middle East* (Waterview, 1999), pp. 8-9.

¹¹ Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 121.

¹² Ronald Jennings, "'Women in Early 17th century Ottoman Judicial Records-The Sharia Court of Anatolian Kaysari'", in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 18 (1975), pp. 53-4. Also see Gavin Hambly, 'Becoming Visible: Medieval Islamic Women in Historiography and History' in Gavin Hambly (ed.), *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage and Piety* (New York, 1998), p. 3.

woman will never enjoy prosperity'.¹³ On the basis of this dictum, historians from the seventeenth century have even attributed the decline of Islamic civilizations to the interference of women in politics, and as Gavin Hambly shows, it was only with the very recent publication of Leslie Peirce's *Imperial Harem*, that this theory was tested.¹⁴ Fanny Davis in 1986 had provided a detailed and enlightening account of the daily lives of upper and middle-class Ottoman women, but it was Peirce's study which not only challenged the Orientalist view of Ottoman women as lascivious and powerless objects of lust by portraying an empowered picture of women, but also challenged the traditional public/private dichotomy which strictly demarcated spheres to men and women. She highlights the intricate networks and factions that operated behind the singular authority of the Sultan and how the close proximity of the women involved in these networks to the Sultan and high administrative officials influenced the politics of the Empire.

The comprehensive volume edited by Madeline Zilfi titled *Women in the Ottoman Empire*, which emerged from a conference at Maryland, explores a larger geographical area and time frame and the fourteen articles within the volume look at women's participation in public activities through specific themes such as property, inheritance, their status and rights in law, and their participation in the arts and literature. While Peirce's study challenged the public/private dichotomy, this volume takes her study one step further by broadening and specifying the various areas of public activity in which not just royal and aristocratic women, but also women from some of the lower classes of society were visible. The next step, according to Palmira Brummett in her review of this volume¹⁵ would be an attempt at comparing Ottoman and European women so as to present a more thorough understanding of Ottoman women and create a more holistic and universal understanding of

¹³ Al-Bukhari, *Al-Sahih* (Collection of Authentic *Hadith*), narrated by Abu Bakr, vol. 4, p. 226. See Fatima Mernissi, *Women and Islam: an Historical and Theological Enquiry* (Oxford, 1991), p. 1.

¹⁴ Gavin Hambly, 'Becoming Visible' in Gavin Hambly (ed.), *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, p. 9.

¹⁵ Madeline Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*, Review author, Palmira Brummett, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (May, 1999), pp. 304-307

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00207438%28199905%2931%3A2%3C304%3AWITOEM%3E2.0.CO%3B2-R>

women's experiences despite cultural, regional or religious differences, which is what this study endeavours to work towards.

The emergence of a more gender-sensitive approach to Ottoman history is relatively new and promises a more sophisticated reading of the sources. Much of this evidence however throws light on the late eighteenth century onwards and information on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries remains limited. And sadly much of the recent evidence is in Turkish and English translations are still hard to come by. Additionally, Suraiya Faruqi states that source material relating to Ottoman peasantry is extremely limited, in many cases restricted to the accounts left by outsiders whose main concern was economic gain rather than the portrayal of Ottoman society. Since poorer women were largely illiterate, the survival of first-hand narratives can be almost discounted. These are the constraints within which historians (particularly non-Turkish historians) of Ottoman women's history have operated.¹⁶

Regarding England there is evidence of only a few individual cases of women seeking their rights in the early modern period. Only in the early eighteenth century are such demands visible in the writing of women such as Mary Astell.¹⁷ According to Anne Laurence, women were hidden from history for three main reasons – age-old prejudices, modern prejudices and a lack of adequate information or records about them. The first prejudice excluded women from the public eye, while modern prejudices include the focus on one section of the population often to the detriment of other groups; in the case of this study, it was the focus on men's lives and activities that often resulted in the overshadowing of the achievements of women in the early modern period.¹⁸ The unearthing of information (particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century), on women's lives has resulted in extensive studies on women from not only all regions of Britain but from all social classes. This has

¹⁶ For details of Ottoman historiography and sources available with respect to women see Suraiya Faruqi, *Approaching Ottoman History*, pp. 4, 15-16, 40-41, 206-207. Also see Suraiya Faruqi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 302

¹⁷ Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, Parts I and II*: edited with Introduction and Notes by Patricia Springburg (London, 1997).

¹⁸ Anne Laurence, *Women in England 1500-1760: A Social History* (London, 1996), pp. 3-4, 6.

provided the other, equally-important dimension to the study of early modern society and has enabled a better understanding of its history.

I do not claim to add new information to the already-existing corpus of women's history, but aim to examine these works cross-culturally with the intention of forming closer connections between cultures which were seen as inherently different. Although Anglo-Ottoman relations have hitherto been researched in political, commercial, economic and cultural terms (by Nabil Matar for instance as mentioned earlier), it has largely been male-focused. This study therefore, will attempt to examine Anglo-Ottoman relations and perceptions with women as their focus, looking at both English male perceptions and opinions of Ottoman women, and English women's first-hand accounts and interactions with Ottoman women. These perceptions and interactions will then be further discussed along with the independent studies of Ottoman women based on Ottoman archives so as to try and determine the reliability of some of these perceptions and accounts. This results in the question of whether the actual practise of women's roles coincided with their normative position and status in the Bible and the Qur'an. This issue therefore will form an important part of the investigation and analysis of English and Ottoman women's social roles.

3) Aims and context of the study:-

As noted above, my contribution to the study of women's history in both historical regions therefore is to provide a comparative element. Instead of exploring a certain aspect of English or Ottoman women's history separately, I will endeavour to study the existing information with the intention of picking out not only the dissimilarities between English and Ottoman women's lives but also try to determine common ground between the two cultures. In addition, an analysis of the normative position of women in religious texts, law and society and the manner in which these normative roles were put into practice in the day-to-day lives of women in all classes of society in both cultures will be attempted. It should be noted at this point however, that a greater chunk of the study focuses on the lives of royal, aristocratic and middle-class women on account of the greater abundance of source material

in both regions relating to the upper classes. Although the lower classes have received some attention in the English context, information on lower class Ottoman women is still limited. Therefore, for purposes of a fairer comparison, the focus is largely on the upper echelons.

William Sewell, through his analysis of Marc Bloch's theory on the uses and limits of the comparative method, sets down the three main uses of historical comparison as:

- a) the means to solve the problems of explanation, or as Sewell elucidates, as a means of testing a hypothesis. Thus, in the absence of the possibility of actual scientific experimentation, the comparative method provides the historian with an avenue through which s/he can test the validity of his/her explanations.
- b) a means by which the distinctiveness of societies could be highlighted. Through the comparative method, an historian can determine whether his/her investigations are unique to a singular setting or situation, or whether the findings have broader implications, through similar occurrences in another geographical setting.
- c) a way in which historians can formulate problems for historical research. For instance, familiarity with developments and situations in one setting can result in historians seeking similar developments in other geographical settings which appear to have key factors of consideration in common with the first.¹⁹

It should be noted, that although Bloch focuses on comparisons between two or more geographical units, Sewell emphasizes that the comparative method can be utilised equally effectively within a single geographical setting in which differing experiences and developments can be observed. Therefore, comparative history in general, as a systematic comparison of subject matter relating to two or more societies, Sewell emphasizes, often makes use of the

¹⁹ William H. Sewell, Jr. 'Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History' in *History and Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 2. (1967), pp. 208-11. Also see Marc Bloch, 'Toward a Comparative History of European Societies' in Frederic C. Lane & Jelle C. Riemersma (eds.), *Enterprise and Secular Change: Readings in Economic History* (London 1953), pp. 494-521.

logic of the comparative method, as well as valuable insights that arise out of adopting a comparative perspective.²⁰

Peter Kolchin, writing in 1982, also identified three major functions of comparative history. 'First and most basic, comparison can create an awareness of alternatives, showing developments to be significant that without a comparative perspective might not appear so.' The second (as also explained by Bloch), was to highlight the peculiarities and unique features of a particular culture, while the third was to identify similarities between the two regions studied. Richard Slatta maintains that a comparative perspective can 'serve as an antidote to over-specialization and parochialism', while in George Fredrickson's view, 'The most profound insights may come from showing how the national and international dimensions interact and modify each other.' These insights into the benefits of a comparative perspective certainly hold true for this particular study. However, there are always dangers that need to be heeded in any approach and a comparative approach is no exception.²¹ While Bloch indicates that the comparison of geographical regions which are close together in space and time would yield better results than those that are remote from each other, Sewell counteracts his argument by stating that, depending on the hypothesis wished to be tested, the comparison of more remote regions in space and time might prove to be more fruitful than areas that are proximate.²² Comparative historians often face the challenge of maintaining constant objectivity and not portraying one region as superior to the other. Furthermore, as Slatta rightly states, 'broad international comparisons can overlook important local variations'.²³ This is an issue which is applicable to this study on account of the kaleidoscope of cultures and religions that the Ottoman Empire encompassed coupled with the obvious lack of specific source material detailing the history of the varying cultural regions. For this very reason, this study is limited to the area in and

²⁰ William Sewell, 'Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History', pp. 213, 217-18.

²¹ Richard Slatta, "Comparative Frontier Mythology," *The Mythical West: An Encyclopaedia of Legend, Lore and Popular Culture* (Santa Barbara, ABC-CLIO, 2001), pp. 96.

²² William Sewell, 'Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History', p. 215.

²³ Drawn and extended from Richard Slatta, "The Whys and Wherefores of Comparative Frontier History," *Journal of the West*, 42: 1 (Winter, 2003), pp. 8-13 and Richard Slatta, "Comparative Frontier Mythology," *The Mythical West: An Encyclopaedia of Legend, Lore and Popular Culture*, pp. 96-100.

immediately around Istanbul so as to try and limit the exclusion of local variations to the minimum and forge more plausible comparisons.

An important dimension of the study of women's history is gendered social roles and the way in which many a time, these roles created a dichotomy of public and private spheres with women's roles being largely restricted within the private or domestic sphere. The concept of public and private spheres assigned to men and women respectively, was elaborated in MicHelle Rosaldo's *Women, Culture and Society* in 1974. In her words:

an opposition between "domestic" and "public" provides the basis of a structural framework necessary to identify and explore the place of male and female in psychological, cultural, social, and economic aspects of human life....Though this opposition will be more or less salient in different social and ideological systems, it does provide a universal framework for conceptualising the activities of the sexes. The opposition does not determine cultural stereotypes or asymmetries in the evaluations of the sexes, but rather underlies them, to support a very general (and for women, often demeaning) identification of women with domestic life and of men with public life.²⁴

Sherry Ortner, Gayle Rubin, Rayna Reiter and Leonore Davidoff²⁵ have all commented on the social construction of the dichotomy of the sexes, the relegation of women to the 'periphery' as mere objects whose main purpose was child-bearing and nurturing. Until recently, historical investigation of women has been carried out within this peripheral framework. The general aim of modern-day historians of women is to centralize the issue of the relationship between the sexes as opposed to studying women within their allotted spheres. The manner in which gender roles functioned in terms of the two spheres differed from culture to culture and therefore the comparative element of this study must deal with the manner in which the public and private spheres existed in both regions.²⁶ For instance, the concept of public

²⁴ MicHelle Rosaldo, "Women, Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview", in MicHelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (eds), *Women, Culture and Society* (California, 1974), 23-4.

²⁵ Sherry Ortner, 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture', in Rosaldo and Lamphere (eds), *Women, Culture and Society*, pp. 67-87; Rayna Reiter (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York, 1975), 11-12, 280-82; Leonore Davidoff, 'Beyond the Public/Private: Thoughts on Feminist History in the 1990's', Paper delivered at Harvard University, Centre for European Studies, Nov. 27, 1990.

²⁶ Susan M. Reverby and Dorothy O. Helly, 'Introduction: Converging on History', in Susan M. Reverby and Dorothy O. Helly (eds), *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's*

and private in Islamic societies is closely intertwined with their perception of female sexuality. While analysing gender in Islam, Fatima Mernissi states that 'Muslim sexuality is territorial: its regulatory mechanisms consist primarily in a strict allocation of space to each sex and an elaborate ritual for resolving the contradictions arising from the inevitable intersections of spaces.'²⁷ However, these regulations result in precisely the opposite effect; the behaviour these regulatory mechanisms are intended to prevent, comes to the fore. Therefore in her opinion, 'sexual segregation (in Islam) intensifies what it is supposed to eliminate: the sexualization of human relations.'²⁸

In this study, the focus is on the situations which resulted in the inclusion of women in what were generally considered as 'male' public spheres such as for example, politics, the arts and literature. The public sphere can be understood in two ways – first, in terms of activities which had been and continued to be largely dominated by men, and second, in terms of actual physical 'male' spaces in which the inclusion of women was considered unsuitable. The discussion in all the following sections will serve to provide an eventual assessment of the manner and extent to which women became visible in the public eye, thereby raising the question of the permeability of the boundaries between public and private in both regions.

Since both England and the Ottoman Empire were perceived as patriarchal societies it would also be useful to mention the manner in which patriarchy as a concept has been understood in the context of this investigation. Radical feminists used the term to describe any 'form or instance of male dominance'.²⁹ In the Islamic context, as demonstrated by Deniz Kandiyoti, in many cases the restrictions of seclusion and segregation placed on women

History, Essays from the Seventh Berkshire Conference on the History of Women (Cornell, 1992), pp. 4, 5, 6, 16. Also see Michelle Perrot (ed.), *Writing Women's History*, translated by Felicia Pheasant (Oxford, 1984), pp. 7-8.

²⁷ Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (London, 1985), pp. 134, 140.

²⁸ Kathy Ferguson, *The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory* (Berkeley, 1993), p. 13.

²⁹ Deniz Kandiyoti, "Islam and Patriarchy: A Comparative Perspective" in Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (eds), *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender* (New York, 1991), pp. 23.

were the very features that instilled within them a sense of pride and respect. This respect, which they perceived as being given to them by men, results in a feeling of control over their domestic domain and self-worth through the participation in this system of seclusion. Kandiyoti notes that Islam has co-existed in areas where society functioned on traditional patriarchal principles and has altered its functioning of gender roles in keeping with the social system. In this manner the distinction of gender roles prescribed by Islam has often been blurred with patriarchal prescriptions and therefore Islam and its doctrines have often been broadly termed as patriarchal.³⁰ The patriarchal nature of English society in the early modern period is also closely linked to religious doctrine and teaching. Therefore, with reference to this thesis patriarchy is understood as male authority and female subordination to this authority in most facets of life. It is the relationship between the theoretical notions of patriarchy that existed in both regions and the practise of the gender roles assigned to each sex within this patriarchal dimension that will be explored in order to determine the extent to which these social roles were indeed flexible. An attempt will also be made to determine the relationship between gender roles, the status of women in society and class. Status is a dynamic concept and while in some cases status may have been associated with the roles that women played in society, in other cases it may have been social class that determined the status of women rather than gender roles. The social position of women in the upper classes of English and Ottoman society was broadly determined by class. However, the main distinction was that while the majority of marriages among the upper classes ensured that women remained within their own social class, the Imperial Harem was further hierarchically stratified. Not only did the social position of women in the lowest level of the hierarchy differ considerably from those at the top, but so did their roles. The marked difference was that most of the women in the Imperial Harem originally belonged to different countries, religions, cultures and classes, but once in the harem network, they assumed the social position that a woman at a certain hierarchical level of the Ottoman Sultan's harem would possess, thereby mitigating all previous associations except that of gender.

³⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 23, 34, 38.

Keeping the basic social position of women in both regions in mind, the status of women in this study will endeavour to look at their position in different contexts and areas of their lives. In addition, an attempt will be made to observe the manner in which the contexts discussed affected their social position over time and whether any parallels can be drawn between the two regions.

Although the emphasis here is primarily on the upper classes, women from the lower classes are occasionally discussed when necessary, in order to gain a fuller knowledge of the issue at hand. Therefore, social classes in this study will be discussed under the following categories:

- 1) The royalty, which included in the English context kings, queens regnant, queens consort, princes and princesses, while in the Ottoman context it included the Sultans, their mothers, their wives or favourite concubines, princes and princesses.
- 2) Upper classes, incorporating the landed aristocracy namely the nobility and gentry in England and the viziers and high administrative officials and their families in Istanbul.
- 3) The middle class, including affluent persons from urban areas who practised professions such as law, mercantile trading and medicine in the English context. This group had become increasingly wealthy in the early modern period but did not possess the same social status as the landed nobility and gentry. They had however gained enough influence to be members of Parliament and be directly involved in the government. In the Ottoman situation it would have also included the *ulema* or religious scholars, *kadis* or judges, *dervişes* as well as poets and artists.
- 4) The lower class which refers to urban traders and artisans such as blacksmiths, bakers, carpenters, etc and persons practising occupations such as teaching and who were employed as governesses. This group also included farmers who formed the majority of the population in the countryside.
- 5) The poor, which refers to the labouring poor in the countryside and urban areas, destitute persons and beggars.

Taking into consideration all of the above dimensions of the study, the broad aim therefore is to explore the permeability of the public and private spheres with specific reference to women's roles in society and the manner in which women used prescribed roles effectively through social, religious, political, artistic and literary activities to create a public image. As mentioned above, the broad objective is to highlight not only the differences, but the similarities that emerge through comparison so as to go one step closer towards presenting a more holistic perception of women's experiences irrespective of cultural or geographical boundaries.

4) Sources:-

For practical reasons the examination of indigenous Ottoman archival material has been difficult, and therefore this particular study relies on the primary source material comprising European/English descriptions and accounts of Ottoman society and religion by travellers, merchants, diplomats and historians, among which are those by Thomas Dallam (1599), John Sanderson (1584-1602), Ottaviano Bon (1604-7), George Sandys (1615), Richard Knolles (1638), Paul Rycaut (1668) and Aaron Hill (1709).³¹ Travel literature gained increasing popularity as travel to the Levant increased throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This study will focus on the prominent narratives which include a considerable degree of information

³¹ Theodore J. Bent (ed.), *Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant I: The diary of Master Thomas Dallam, 1599-1600; II: Extracts from the diaries of Dr. John Covel, 1670-1679; with some account of the Levant Company of Turkey Merchants* (London, Hakluyt Society, 1893); Richard Knolles, *The generall historie of the Turkes, from the beginning of that nation to the rising of the Ottoman Familie: with all the notable expeditions of the Christian princes against them. Together with The lives and Conquests of the Ottoman kings and emperours... With a new continuation, from ye yeare of our Lord 1629 unto the yeare 1638 faithfully collected* (London, 1638); Ottaviano Bon, *A description of the Grand Signor's seraglio, or Turkish emperours court* (London, 1650); Sir William Foster (ed.), *The travels of John Sanderson in the Levant, 1584-1602 : with his autobiography and selections from his correspondence* (Nendeln, 1967); George Sandys, *A relation of a iourney begun An. Dom: 1610: Fovre bookes: Containing a description of the Turkish Empire, of Ægypt, of the Holy Land, of the remote parts of Italy, and ilands adioyming* (London, 1637); Paul Rycaut, *The present state of the Ottoman Empire: Containing the maxims of the Turkish politie, the most material points of the Mahometan religion, their sects and heresies, their convents and religious votaries. Their military discipline, with an exact computation of their forces both by land and sea: Illustrated with divers pieces of sculpture, representing the variety of habits amongst the Turks. In three books* (London, 1668); Aaron Hill, *A full and just account of the present of the Ottoman empire in all its branches: faithfully related from a serious observation taken in many years travels thro' those countries* (London, 1709).

on Ottoman women such as those mentioned above. These works often mirrored earlier writings on the region and are seldom first-hand or accurate images. However, early descriptions of Ottoman women are scarce and/or sweeping, particularly in the account of John Sanderson, since the narrators in question were all men and access to women's quarters was forbidden to non-family or non-harem members. Bon, Rycaut, Knolles, Sandys and Hill's accounts incorporate more detail about women's lives, the source for which was often knowledge from inhabitants of the Sultan's seraglio. Although more detailed, they were not eyewitness representations. Therefore the eighteenth-century published collection of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* is a mine of information where the Imperial Harem and the lifestyle of the Turkish ruling elite were concerned.

While at times detailed and accurate, the late sixteenth and seventeenth-century male narratives presented an image of Ottoman women from a distance and often coloured by pre-existent stereotypical prejudices and representations that stemmed from the western imagination of the harem. In particular, the mystery of the harem in the western imagination was a theme that was popularly fostered through Restoration drama in England, in which the Turks, particularly post-1683 (after their defeat at Vienna) were seen as less of a political threat and often as debauches lusting after women, who were portrayed as objects of desire. Lady Wortley Montagu's representation is most insightful, in that it presents to the reader similar information about Ottoman women as experienced and seen also through the eyes of a woman. For instance, while male narratives talked about veiling, the seclusion of women and its assumed consequent negative impact on women's social status, Lady Wortley Montagu deemed them to be the freest of all women on account of their heavily-layered clothing which made them invisible and therefore free. On the other hand, she observed that the women she met in the *hammam* (public bath) considered the English hoop skirt to be a form of constraint that husbands placed upon their wives.³² Therefore, it is the unique (at least at the time) perspective on Ottoman women by an Englishwoman

³² Malcolm Jack (ed.), *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: The Turkish Embassy Letters* (London, 1994), pp. 59-60.

which not only placed Ottoman women in a different light from that of her male predecessors, but also paved the way for later narratives of Ottoman women by wives of subsequent English ambassadors and visitors to Istanbul such as the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century narratives of Elizabeth Craven and Julia Pardoe respectively.³³

The letters by some of the *hasekis* and *valide sultans*, which have been translated into English by Henry Ellis and analysed by Susan Skilliter, will also help to bring to light the involvement of Ottoman royal women in the diplomatic activities of the government.³⁴ The seventeenth-century Ottoman derviş and traveller Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname* (in 10 volumes) provides detailed information on his travels through the Ottoman lands. In particular, his volume on the statesman and his patron Melek Ahmed Paşa gives us a glimpse of the lives of Ottoman royal women through his marriages to the princess Kaya Sultan and after her death, to an older princess, Fatma Sultan. Its invaluable translation into English by Robert Dankoff has made numerous facets of seventeenth-century Ottoman life accessible to historians.³⁵

On the English side we have the advantage of published autobiographies, biographies, and books on general household matters written by men and women as well as literary works especially from the seventeenth century onwards.³⁶ Although the volume of women's writing in this period, when compared to that by men, was limited and not wholly representative of all sections of society, it provides invaluable information, not only about the aristocracy, but also about the daily lives of poorer women. In comparison to

³³ Lady Wortley Montagu's letters, however, are not concerned with middle and lower class women of Ottoman society, since she mainly described in detail the lives of those women she interacted with as the wife of a foreign ambassador. Also see Lady Elizabeth Craven, *A Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 1798 (New York, 1970) and Julia Pardoe, *The City of the Sultan V2: And Domestic Manners of the Turks in 1836* (2007).

³⁴ Susan Skilliter, 'Three Letters from the Ottoman Sultana "Safiye" to Queen Elizabeth I', in S. M. Stern (ed.), *Documents from Islamic Chanceries, First series* (Oxford, 1965).

³⁵ Robert Dankoff, *The Intimate Life of an Ottoman Statesman: Melek Ahmed Pasha (1588-1662), as portrayed in Evliya Çelebi's Book of Travels (Seyahat-name)* (New York, 1991). Ottoman women's involvement in the political, social, legal, economic, artistic, literary and religious spheres will be investigated through the works of Leslie Peirce (1993), Suraiya Faroqhi (2000), Godfrey Goodwin (1997), Raphaela Lewis (1971), Bernard Lewis (1993) and Fanny Davis, (1986) Judith Tucker (1998), Margaret Meriwether (1999) and Fatima Mernissi (1991).

³⁶ Full detailed references of the sources are to be found in the bibliography and my analysis of them in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

the evidence on Ottoman women, the material available for research on historical Englishwomen is both more abundant and more widely focused in terms of all social classes. Autobiographies and literary works by women in the early modern period are still very numerous and therefore I have tried to pick out only the most practically accessible and well-known works and authors, both relevant and as closely representative to the discussion at hand. For instance, some of the sources used here are diaries and autobiographies of Margaret Hoby (1599-1603), Anne Clifford (1616-19), Alice Thornton (written in the seventeenth century and published in part in the nineteenth century) and Anne Wentworth (1677), the household manuals of Gervase Markham (1618) and William Gouge (1622), the letters of Queen Mary II (1662-94) and Queen Anne (1665-1714) and literary works by Margaret Cavendish (1623?-1673), Mary Wroth (1587?-1651/3), Aphra Behn (1640?-1689) and Mary Astell (1666-1731) to name a few.³⁷

5) Structure:-

In an attempt at investigating the status that women enjoyed in the early modern period, the study will commence by investigating the interpretations by religious leaders, intellectuals and authors (including those by women) of the position women held in the Bible and the Qur'an. This provides a framework within which the rest of the investigation is set.

Closely linked to religious beliefs about the status of women was their position in the afterlife which revolved around the souls of women. The reference to the absence of women's souls or the inferiority of their souls in English travel narratives and literary works provides the basis for an investigation about the cause for such references with regard to Ottoman women. Most of the accounts analysed mention women's immoral nature and link it to the state of

³⁷ Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity, English Women's Writing, 1649-88* (London, 1988), pp. 23-5. Where secondary sources are concerned, the works of Sara Mendelson (1987) and Patricia Crawford (1993) and Anne Laurence (1996) on women in early modern England, studies by Ralph Houlbrooke (1984), Lawrence Stone (1977) and Jim Sharpe (1997) on the family along with studies of church court records on marriage and separation laws, Wallace MacCaffrey (1993), Susan Doran (1996) and Felix Pryor (2003) on Elizabeth I for instance will be looked at. Studies by Elaine Beilin (1987), Harriet Blodgett (1988), Michael Levey (1975) and Elizabeth Howe (1992) will be used to examine women's position in law, their education and their participation in art and literature. Full references are available in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 and the bibliography.

their souls and position in the afterlife. It is possible that such mention was linked to specific emphasis and interpretations of certain sections of religious texts. Therefore, the next section of the thesis is devoted to the exploration of this particular issue.

This is followed by two sections dealing with a detailed comparison of society within the two regions with emphasis on marriage, divorce and visibility in the political arena. The exclusion of women from many legal rights that were permitted to men was one of the main reasons for their social position and lack of participation in some areas of public life. The discussion of women's legal rights and position in this study however will be limited to the areas of women's lives examined here, largely with reference to marriage and separation.

Literature and art constitute an important means of portraying the life of the age in which they had their inception. These aspects also constitute the mediums through which English perceptions of the Ottoman world took shape although in the field of art, the representations occurred largely in the nineteenth century. Therefore, the last chapter deals with literary and artistic activity surrounding women, not only their literary and artistic contributions in both areas under study, but also the manner in which they were represented in the literature and art of the period. Closely related to authorship are literacy and education and therefore women's education and its limitations will also be discussed briefly in relation to growing female authorship in the early modern period.

The study concludes with an analysis of parallels that can be drawn between the two cultures as regards women and gender issues. The endeavour is to investigate possible causes for the similarities as well as the differences; the extent to which these can be attributed to biased, ignorant or inaccurate accounts, as well as the extent to which these similarities and distinctions were based on religious doctrines and/or environmental influences. Most crucially, the comparison between English and Ottoman women will be

examined in terms of the public and private and an attempt will be made to observe the extent to which the permeability of the boundaries in both cultures struck a common chord.

It should be noted that because of the comparative nature of this study, I do not claim to have attained a superior knowledge or understanding of either regions, culture or religion. This is on account of the fact that firstly, it would demand far more research time and a lengthier study, and second, since it is beyond the limited scope of a doctoral thesis, I have not been in a position to introduce or expand into all aspects of English or Ottoman women's history. I have however tried to be as comprehensive as this study would allow by focusing on some of the key factors that influenced early modern women and I will endeavour to address the questions and speculations mentioned above in this light. In addition, although I am aware that women participated and were visible in aspects of life not dealt with here, such as in the economic life of the community, I have only been able to isolate the areas of life which were representative of most women in both regions in order to attempt a fairer comparison. Moreover, the inclusion of all aspects of women's lives would be far beyond the scope of what is already a broad investigation. This would have only made the study unmanageable and would not have permitted me to do justice to the topics discussed. This is largely also the reason for the focus on Istanbul and its neighbouring areas where the discussion of the Ottoman Empire is concerned. Since the Ottoman Empire encompassed a variety of ethnic races, cultures, customs and traditions, the inclusion of all these dimensions would have required a much broader canvas than that of a doctoral thesis.

SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Before examining the various aspects of English and Ottoman women's lives in the early modern period, it is essential to initially glance at the scriptural view of women in the Bible and the Qur'an, as well as English perceptions of Muslim women in general (and Ottoman women in particular), so as to provide a backdrop around which the study of women in the ensuing chapters can evolve. Religion formed the integral framework around which these societies and monarchies functioned and ruled and therefore women's roles as set out in the scriptures and their interpretations through the ensuing centuries were instrumental in dictating not only their roles and position in society but also perceptions of them. Interpretations of the scriptures abounded and therefore it is also crucial to remember that the roles assigned to women, their position in society as well as the manner in which they were perceived did not always coincide with theory. It was after all the practise of theory that determined societal roles and it is therefore essential to explore the extent to which this practise incorporated the salient scriptural doctrines relating to women. This will be attempted through an investigation of the interpretations and opinions by religious scholars and authors of Christianity in early modern times and their corresponding opinions of women in Islam.

Prior to beginning this delicate task, it is important to emphasize the complexity of the scriptures being dealt with and assumptions and interpretations abound leaving ample room for debate. Considering the scriptures today becomes all the more complex when we take into consideration the fact that sixteenth and seventeenth century societies read the Greek, Latin and English translations of the Gospels instead of their original Hebrew/Aramaic version. Additionally in the case of the Qur'an, a seventeenth-century Ottoman scholar would have had to grapple with the old Arabic of the Qur'an rather than the more modern version of Arabic that they would have been familiar with. No two languages are the same and therefore often the real essence or meaning of texts can be partly lost in translation as

may have been the case with translations of the Bible and the Qur'an. Indeed there is also a vast difference in dialects of a single language and therefore the extent to which an Ottoman scholar entirely understood and grasped the essence of seventh-century Arabic is also debatable. Similarly, the New Testament as well as the *Hadith* is a collection of traditions, teachings and sayings by Jesus and Muhammad respectively. Although a collection, the *Hadith* for instance consists of only what was at the time considered by the collectors of the *Hadith* to be the most authentic Prophetic traditions and proclamations, filtering out what they believed to be unauthentic. This approach therefore has rendered the *Hadith* a relatively subjective opinion of what was considered authentic. The investigation of women in the scriptures therefore will endeavour to keep these issues and problems in mind through its analysis.

It is also essential to mention at the outset that although this chapter takes into account the role of women in Islam in general, the Ottoman practise of Islamic doctrine also involved a consideration of the specific environment, traditions and ethnic customs of the region. Therefore the Islamic experience in all its details may have differed from one Islamic kingdom to another. Hence, this study will only focus on the Ottoman experience of Islam and its practise within this context. In addition, this chapter concentrates on western Christianity in general and Christianity in England in particular. Eastern traditions of Christianity have not been explored purely because this study investigates only the English experience of Christianity vis-à-vis that of Ottoman Islam.

1) Interpretations of the Status of women in the Bible and Perception of Women's Spirituality:-

While the Old Testament is an amalgamation of Judaic doctrines imparted through the teachings of the prophets who preceded Jesus,¹ it was the period following his death that resulted in the actual compilation of the books that constitute the New Testament. The outcome was that certain sections

¹ The prophets of the Old Testament are common to all three Peoples of the Book.

attributed to the Evangelists promoted the teachings of Jesus where equality of the sexes was concerned,² while other sections reverted to the designation of women to a lower position.³

Covering the head was viewed as a sign of inferiority and therefore the practice of women covering their heads in church was common. Equally, men were not expected to cover their heads since they represented the authority which women were meant to be subject to:

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but [they are commanded] to be under obedience, as also saith the law....And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

This passage is also incongruent with the ability of women to occupy the post of preachers as well as Jesus' emphasis on women being well-versed with the Word of God. Further illustration of women's subordinate position is through the following passage:

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. (1 Corinthians 11:3).⁴

The latter category of verses seem to negate those teachings of Jesus which had been contributed towards raising the status of women,⁵ thereby giving way to, as one would expect, many differing opinions through the following centuries which only serve to complicate an already delicate issue.

Although the issue of spiritual equality had been asserted in the Bible, there were still particular subjects such as female inheritance for instance, that were

² John 1:12, Galatians 3:28, 1 Corinthians 11:11-12, Acts 2:1-21, Acts 18:24-26, Acts 21:9, Romans 16:1 and Philemon 2 for instance reiterate the spiritual equality of both sexes in the eyes of God.

³ See 1 Corinthians 11:7-10 for instance.

⁴ Unlike Jesus' message of spiritual equality of both sexes, these passages in general, and the last one in particular, suggest a clear hierarchy, with God at the top and women at the bottom, as opposed to the equality of both men and women.

⁵ Mainstream opinion tends to concur with *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* that 'The actions of Jesus of Nazareth towards women were therefore revolutionary.' B.M. Metzger & M.D. Coogan, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 806-818. This strain of thought should be viewed in the context of the time frame however, in terms of pre-existent Judaic laws.

not addressed in relatively equal terms. The inheritance rules are laid down in Numbers 27:1-11. In the absence of sons, the property of the deceased father was to be divided amongst his daughters. However, in the presence of a male heir, daughters, wives and mothers were not entitled in any way to benefit from the paternal legacy and therefore, widows and unmarried daughters or orphans were often entirely at the mercy of their relatives. If they were unfortunate where relatives were concerned, they were relegated to a life of destitution.⁶ Where the financial dependence of widows in particular was concerned for instance, Jesus repeated the importance of supporting them throughout his ministry. The Gospel of Luke alone contains 6 references to widows: (Luke 2:36, 4:26, 7:11, 18:1, 20:47 and 21:1). Moreover, in 1 Timothy 5:3-16, it is stated that it is the religious duty of the widow's relatives to look after her. However, if she is widowed without any living relation, it is the duty of the Church to take her under its wing. It is advised however, that younger widows should remarry since their worldly desires would overshadow their spiritual responsibilities to the Church and God. In addition, the Church would also in this manner be relieved to a degree of financially assisting widows.

Women were often left at a disadvantage where inheritance rights (as specified in the Bible) were concerned. Financial dependence on men often left women further vulnerable. Consequently, in the following centuries, women were at times left with no option other than to bear the torment of an unhappy and oppressive marriage purely because of this dependence.

Interpretation and emphasis constitutes an inseparable part of the study of religion. The emphasis on sections of the New Testament in the centuries following the establishment of Christianity enabled numerous church leaders and commentators to accentuate the superior status of men. For instance, Tertullian (about 155-225 AD), referred to women as 'Devil's gateway', while St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD) stated, 'I fail to see what use woman can be to man, if one excludes the function of bearing children.' These opinions

⁶ Christian and civil law throughout Europe oddly enough adhered to the old Mosaic tradition of inheritance and the movement towards procuring female rights to inheritance only gained momentum in the nineteenth century in Europe.

were largely on account of Eve being assigned the entire responsibility for the 'Original Sin' and the consequent punishment of the pains of childbearing administered to her by God:

And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. (Genesis 2:22).

For Adam was first formed, then Eve....And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression....Notwithstanding, she will be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety. (1 Timothy 2:13-15).

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire [shall be] to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. (Genesis 3:16).⁷

A Christian marriage was considered as the union of man and woman for the purpose of procreation, regulating sexual activity and providing mutual comfort. Once married, the matrimonial state was a sacrament, the upholding of which was imperative. While men were urged to love and honour their wives as they did their own bodies, wives were required to obey their husbands and live in submission to them. Since marriage was a sacrament, divorce was not an option for either spouse. In keeping with St. Paul's stance on marriage,⁸ some early Christian clergymen viewed women as impure and therefore believed that engaging in matrimony with any of them would pollute them. Consequently, many Christian clergymen adopted a tradition of monasticism and celibacy. Marriage was discouraged by bishops and clergy such as St. Jerome (d. 420 AD), St. Ambrose (339-397 AD) and Pope Gregory (eighth century).⁹ Monasticism was therefore propounded despite Jesus' attempts to alleviate Jewish notions of women's impure nature by not

⁷ 'No wickedness comes anywhere near the wickedness of a woman.....Sin began with a woman and thanks to her we all must die' (Ecclesiastes 25:19,24).

⁸ Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family, 1450-1700* (New York, 1984), pp. 96-7. See 1 Corinthians 7:1-16, 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:22-24,33b, and 1 Peter 3:7 for women's role in matrimony and St. Paul's views of it.

⁹ M.H. Kidwai, *Woman: under different social and religious laws (Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam)* (New Delhi, 1976), pp. 25, 26.

only interacting with them, but also including them in his inner circle.¹⁰ Luke 8:1-3 describes the inner circle of Jesus' followers: 12 male disciples and an unspecified number of female supporters (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and 'many others'). Furthermore, Jesus' resurrection was first witnessed by women who were entrusted with the enormous responsibility of revealing this pivotal event to the rest of the believers. Jesus' teachings included and referred to 'all', irrespective of gender, as opposed to the Jewish practice of confining religious teaching to men. Since women had been considered as inferior beings, it had been believed that they were not entitled to study the Torah (Luke 7:35-8:50 and Luke 13:16).¹¹

As we move on to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the degree of direct female involvement in the religious field was clearly not only overshadowed by, but also viewed in relation (in terms of dependence) to, the opposite sex, rather than an independent relationship with the Church, Christ and God.

The spiritual plight of women in thirteenth-century England is depicted in Jacqueline Murray's essay on women in relation to confessors' manuals. She most poignantly emphasizes women's secondary and almost inconsequential place in the plethora of confessors' manuals by describing them as 'afterthoughts'. As Murray states, it is essential to remember that confession originated in a predominantly male monastic atmosphere and therefore sharp gendered differences in confessors' manuals perhaps had their basis in this tradition. The fact that the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 made confession a duty for both sexes indicates that this dominant male-oriented perception of confession existed even as late as the thirteenth century.¹² Thus it indicates

¹⁰ Luke 10:38-42 describes his visit to the home of Mary and Martha; where Mary chose to be taught by Jesus rather than help her sister make a meal. Jesus praised her for the decision. According to Witherington, this incident only served to further emphasize the doctrine that 'man and woman stand together and side by side before God. They are equal in honor and grace; they are endowed with the same gifts and have the same responsibilities.' Ben Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 129. For the reference on the resurrection see Matthew 28:9-10.

¹¹ Jesus further violated beliefs in the impurity of women when he spoke to not only Jewish women who had hitherto been strangers to him, but also to foreign women, who were considered twice as impure. See Mark 5:25-34 and John 4:7-5:30.

¹² Jacqueline Murray, 'The Absent Penitent: The Cure of Women's Souls and Confessors' Manuals in Thirteenth-Century England' in Lesley Smith and Jane H.M. Taylor (eds), *Women, the Book and the Godly: selected proceedings of the St. Hilda's Conference, 1993* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 14-5.

an exclusion of women from an important religious duty – a duty of all Christians which would bring them closer to Paradise through the pardoning of their sins. The exclusion of women from it however signified a lack of acknowledgement of the spiritual equality of the sexes since they were not permitted the opportunity to purify themselves of their sins in the hope of entering Paradise, despite early Christian precedent of saints such as Felicitas and Perpetua, who on 7 March 203 became martyrs for the faith at Carthage.¹³ When women were eventually permitted confession, they reacted in different ways and many a time their reactions were largely determined by the relationship they shared with their confessors. Some medieval women recorded their experiences of confession. In some cases, they cemented a strong relationship with their confessors, but in other cases, such as that of Margery Kempe, the experience of confession proved to be very stressful and unpleasant.¹⁴ Most confessor manuals were largely androcentric – keeping the male penitent as the standard, they simply changed the gender while dealing with sins pertaining to women. Therefore, this clear imbalance in confessors' manuals further exalted the male penitent when compared to his female counterpart.¹⁵

Women's place in the confessors' manuals therefore almost seemed to be incidental rather than central, unlike that of men. On account of the androcentric nature of these manuals, equal emphasis on, and sensitivity towards, female confession appeared to be lacking. This gives the impression that, at the end of the day, it was men's sins, their confession and penitence that mattered; the penitence of women for their sins being regarded as inconsequential. An intriguing aspect was that women's souls too were perceived as inferior to those of men since women were urged to consider the desire and pleasure of their husbands before they could attend to penitence as a means of mitigating their sins. Murray sums up by stating that in thirteenth-century England the subordinate position of women was further enhanced by confession as laid down in the confessors' manuals, and

¹³ J.R. Harris and S.K. Gifford, *The Acts of Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* (London, 1890).

¹⁴ Murray, 'The Absent Penitent', p. 16-7.

¹⁵ For details on the authors and contents of confessors' manuals see *Ibid*, pp. 17-21.

therefore provided a significant hindrance in the completion of their religious duties.¹⁶

Although Thomas Aquinas (1225 or 1227-1274), in *Summa Theologiae*, did not project as harsh an image of women as some of his predecessors, he, simultaneously, made his stand clear:

As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active power of the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of a woman comes from defect in the active power.

He almost instantly contradicts this clear declaration of women's defective nature by saying that woman was not in fact misbegotten but was produced for the purpose of procreation and that her creation was the intention of God.¹⁷ However, the tacit message still appeared to exalt man and confine women's purpose in this world to procreation.

In practise however, the alternative to marriage and procreation for women was the path leading to a cloistered life as a nun. As Eileen Power and much later, Sally Thompson in their comprehensive works on medieval nunneries have shown, nunneries largely tended to be inhabited by upper class women for whom a spiritual life was the only other alternative to marriage. The overpowering desire for a spiritual life however need not have necessarily been their primary motive for entering a nunnery. Apprenticeship and domestic labour generating a much-needed income were not respectable options for upper class women who could not afford to (or for any other reason could not) get married, as was the case with women from the lower ranks. According to Bruce Venarde, although the number of new foundations for monasteries increased significantly after the Norman conquest those for women increased only during the mid-twelfth century. Sally Thompson has shown that in the first half of the twelfth century women's religious communities often worked in association with monasteries but concerns about

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 21.

¹⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Vol. 13, 1a.90-102, Introduction, notes and appendices by Edmund Hill (London, 1964), pp. 35, 37.

the inappropriateness of male and female religious communities working in association resulted in the separation of many female orders towards the end of the twelfth century.¹⁸

Didactic literature particularly in the thirteenth century, exalted the state of virginity and at times attacked marriage. One such poem was *Hali Meidenhood* written anonymously. Another was an anonymous treatise titled *Ancrene Riwe* (Anchoresses' Rule), divided into eight parts. Written originally for three anchoresses, most of it is also applicable to communities of nuns. While the former extolled the virtues of a life devoted to God, one part of the latter treatise also dealt with the external lives of the anchoresses and how it should be ordered. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries however also saw some satirical works harshly criticising nuns and presenting a sceptical view of their spirituality. John Gower for instance in his *Vox Clamantis* stated that although both monks and nuns were meant to live in chastity women were more likely to transgress on account of their weaker nature and moral frailty. The early decades of the sixteenth century saw writings attacking the monastic life for women such as two dialogues by the humanist Erasmus titled 'The Virgin averse to Matrimony' and 'The Penitent Virgin' in his *Colloquies* (1526) and a satire by the Scottish poet Sir David Lyndesay, *Ane Pleasant Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis, in commendation of vertew and vituperatioun of vyce* (1535). Writings such as these criticised the pressure that men and women were placed under to adopt a cloistered life and the avarice and immorality of the inhabitants of convents.¹⁹ Such writings should however be viewed in their context for at the eve of the Reformation such authors had their own agenda.

With the advent of the sixteenth century came one of the most momentous turns in the history of Christianity with its bifurcation into Catholicism and Protestantism. Although some believed that Luther (1483-1546) had been the

¹⁸ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries, c. 1275-1535* (Cheshire, 1988?), pp. 4-14, Sally Thompson, *Women religious: the founding of English nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 213-14 and Bruce L. Venarde, *Women's monasticism and medieval society: nunneries in France and England, 890-1215* (London, 1999), pp. 179-81.

¹⁹ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp. 525, 527-31, 544-5, 549-52.

campaigner for enhancing the status of women, Patrick Collinson suggests that his campaign for women's emancipation was limited. He saw women as spiritually equal, but simultaneously acknowledged their inequality in temporal terms. Women outside the marital bond continued to be considered with suspicion, and with no longer the option of spending a celibate life devoted to spiritual acts within a nunnery, the need for women to enter into marriage was enhanced. However, it was within the marital context that Luther sought to advocate greater equality where household duties were concerned between a husband (who was portrayed as a 'new man') and wife. However, as Lyndal Roper in *The Holy Household* has argued, there was a 'conservative shift' with regard to women after the Reformation as their lives were viewed within the restrictive boundaries of the family without the pre-Reformation option of a single and comparatively independent life within a nunnery.²⁰ At this point it should be stressed that the experience of the Reformation varied from country to country based on their culture, traditions and history and here our discussion will largely focus on the English Reformation.²¹

Following the Reformation in England, Protestant beliefs did not differ much from the teachings of St. Peter and tender consideration on the part of the husband towards his wife was emphasized further in theory.²² However, at the same time, Matthew's Bible of 1537²³ placed an emphasis on passages such as 1 Peter 3 which stated that if a wife be 'not obedient and helpful to him, he (her husband) endeavoureth to beat the fear of God into her head, and that thereby she may be compelled to learn her duty and do it'.²⁴ The role of a Protestant wife was ambiguous as Norman Jones in his work on the English Reformation has demonstrated. In short, although the priesthood of all believers empowered women with the freedom of conscience, they were

²⁰ Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 2-3.

²¹ Patrick Collinson, *The Reformation* (London, 2005), pp. 153-4.

²² For a summary of St. Peter's doctrines on marriage, see Ralph Houlbrooke, *English Family*, pp. 97-8.

²³ For details of the Gospel see Daniel Patte, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Philadelphia, 1987) and Stephen Dray, *Matthew's gospel* (Leicester, 1998).

²⁴ Lawrence Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1977) p. 197. In Calvin's Geneva, which formed so important a model for much of Protestant Europe, women's legal rights declined, while their inferior position was further emphasized and reiterated by their exclusion from the priesthood and consistory.

subject to male authority and were meant to obey it. However, the freedom of conscience also gave women the right to guide an unbelieving husband towards Protestant beliefs since their obedience to God came first. Such ambiguities led to several interpretations of these principles laying down the duties of women in various situations.²⁵

The *Homily of the State of Matrimony* which was published in 1562, constituted another medium for emphasizing the weakness and inconstant nature of women:

Ye wives, be ye in subjection to obey your own husbands. To obey is another thing than to control or command; which yet they may do to their children, and to their family; but as for their husbands, them must they obey, and cease from commanding, and perform subjection. ...Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord: for the husband is the head of the woman, as Christ is the Head of the church. Here you understand that God hath commanded that ye should acknowledge the authority of the husband, and refer to him the honour of obedience.²⁶

By stressing their weakness as the cause of their fickle nature, husbands were advised to forgo their 'right' of beating sense into them, and instead attempt to comprehend their nature in the above light. As Mendelson and Crawford observe, although men were perceived as both physically and mentally superior to women, they were advised to use their mental might (rather than physical) to admonish their wives. In any event, their superiority to women was clearly emphasized.²⁷ In his sermon titled *The Bride-Woman Counsellor* in 1599, Reverend John Sprint reiterated women's flawed nature on account of Eve's folly and chided womankind by saying that man's sweet nature had been corrupted by Eve who was not satisfied despite having a husband with the most pleasant and perfect disposition. Women were therefore to subject themselves entirely to the desires of their husbands, which he considered to be the key to a 'happy and Christian life'.²⁸ In any

²⁵ Norman Jones, *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation* (Oxford, 2002), p. 38.

²⁶ Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England, 1500-1720* (London, 1993), p. 38.

²⁷ Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998), p. 33.

²⁸ Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, p. 198. As Stone points out, weakness, modesty, chastity, charitableness and subordination embodied the ideal sixteenth-century woman.

event, by the end of the sixteenth century living one's life according to one's religious values became equated with honour and virtue (and virtue was in turn equated with obedience and silence for instance) and this was perceived as the most respectable existence for women.²⁹

Attitudes were not greatly altered as the seventeenth century advanced. William Gouge, a clergyman from London, explicitly laid down common duties in his work *Of Domesticall Duties, Eight Treatises* in 1622 and 1634. Based primarily on the scriptures, it lay down the prerequisites of an ideal relationship between husband and wife. He stipulated that 'If there be not love predominant in the husband, there is like to be little peace betwixt man or wife.'³⁰ However, he also simultaneously stated that 'the extent of wives' subjection doth stretch itself very far, even to all things'. Hence, even though he did emphasize the presence of love in marriage, he also agreed that 'though an husband in regard of evil qualities may carry the image of the devil, yet in regard to his place and office, he beareth the image of God'. Certain sections of the Bible were also used to bolster his argument: 'We cannot but think that the woman was made before the Fall that the man might rule over her'. According to him, there was a plausible reason 'that she who first drew man into sin should now be subject to him, lest by the like womanish weakness she fall again'. He did, however, advise against wife-beating, more for moral concerns rather than legal ones.³¹ One can only wonder at the contradictory nature of his propounded principles, for on the one hand, his stress on love almost gives us the impression that he was the advocate of the companionate marriage, but on the other hand, his emphasis on the subordinate position of women negates this. It is likely however that his perception of a companionate marriage comprised an obedient wife living in subjection to a loving husband, who would not exploit his authority.

Some commentators in the seventeenth century, however, favourably interpreted passages from Genesis (such as Genesis 3:16), which hitherto

²⁹ Norman Jones, *The English Reformation*, p. 39.

³⁰ J.A. Sharpe, *Early Modern England, A Social History, 1550-1760* (London, 1997), p. 66.

³¹ William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622), pp. 268, 269, 273, 289-92. Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, p. 197. Gouge's perception of the ideal housewife will be discussed in Chapter 3.

had been the basis of much misogynistic thought. The early Quakers, who believed that they had reacquired the innocence that preceded the Fall, also believed in the equality of the sexes, not only spiritually, but also socially and politically. Quakerism offered women greater participation in religion than the Anglican Church. Women established separate meetings in which religious issues were discussed. It should be noted that a sizable number of seventeenth-century literature attributed to women was written by Quaker women.³² Authors such as John Swan (in *Speculum Mundi*, 1635) equated women with men by saying that since Eve was created from Adam's rib (as opposed to his head or his foot to rule over or be dominated over respectively), she had clearly been meant to stand beside him as an equal in all respects. An instance of the report by Thomas Salthouse to Margaret Fell of the birth of a daughter by a woman without any pain indicated a return to the pre-Fall state where womankind was not sentenced to the pains of childbirth.³³ Although the Baptists were generally viewed as campaigners for female liberation, in 1658 the Abingdon Association of Particular Baptist churches were unanimous that women should remain silent in church since that would, in their opinion, be in conjunction with the concept of female inferiority. It was sects such as the Quakers, Diggers and Ranters that came closest to practising the equality of the sexes. The Quaker George Fox (1624-91) in 1656 had expressed similar views as the Abingdon Association two years prior to their declaration. However, his marriage thereafter appears to have altered his views since by 1680 he was leaning more towards the spiritual equality of the sexes.³⁴ A substantially large proportion of visionary women, who wrote, held positions of authority and prophesied in the mid-seventeenth century were Quakers. As Keith Thomas and Phyllis Mack have shown, some women (particularly prior to the Civil War) took recourse in

³² Patricia Crawford, 'From the Woman's View: Pre-industrial England, 1500-1750', in Patricia Crawford, Margaret Anderson, Raelene Davidson, Patricia Jalland and Margaret Ker (eds), *Exploring Women's Past: essays in social history* (London, 1984), pp. 58-9

³³ N.H. Keeble (ed.), *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman: A Reader* (London, 1994), pp. 4,6,8,9,12. Also see Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 33. Huigh Groot or Hugo Grotius (April 10 1583-August 28 1645), in his *Adamus Exul*, argued that it was Adam's love for Eve that was the cause for the Fall. According to him the Fall occurred on account of Adam's subservience to Eve, a concept which would have unnerved most religious scholars of the time.

³⁴ Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (London, 1977), pp. 117-8.

prophecy and divine visions as a means of expressing their opinions on public issues, which was otherwise discouraged through sermons. The experiences of these visionary women were wide-ranging, from self-identification with the poor and suffering in the world and reiteration of traditional feminine virtues, to a desire for a utopian world where women strove towards their moral and intellectual betterment.³⁵ Despite this, as Anne Laurence has observed, women in even the radical sects could not participate in church government or administer the sacraments. There were limits on their preaching and prophesying; largely, their involvement in the organisation of these sects was an extension of their domestic duties and Christian virtues of spirituality practised within their homes.³⁶ In other words, the beliefs of these sects in the equality of women in the religious field were not put into practise and although women had been given a greater opportunity to directly participate in religious activities, it was within the limits of male authority.

John Milton is, as Christopher Hill in *Milton and the English Revolution* points out, remembered today as the advocate of the subjection of women largely on the grounds of his statement: 'He for God only, she for God in him.' According to Hill however, this statement is often quoted out of context and was merely a 'poetical version' of St. Paul's Ephesians 5:22-3 and his statements reflecting the subordination of women are based on Biblical verses. Therefore Hill goes on to defend Milton by saying that his status as the propagator of female subordination was earned primarily on the basis that he echoed theories which upheld male authority.³⁷

Additionally, in *Paradise Lost*, Milton clearly expresses the dilemma that Adam faces in accepting his superior position in the face of Eve's beauty of both body and mind. Adam's 'awe' of Eve gives the reader the impression of Eve's almost superior status in Adam's eyes, rather than him perceiving and readily

³⁵ Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: ecstatic prophecy in seventeenth-century England* (Berkeley, 1992), pp. 1, 408, 412 and Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England* (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 162-4.

³⁶ Anne Laurence, 'A Priesthood of She-believers: Women and Congregations in Mid-seventeenth Century England', in W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds), *Women in the Church* (Blackwell, 1990), pp. 362-363.

³⁷ C. Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*, pp. 117-8.

acknowledging her as his inferior. As Hill explains, Milton uses the incident of the creation of Eve in Genesis as a means to lay stress on the equality of the sexes as desired by none other than Adam in his petition to God.³⁸

An aspect of women's involvement where Milton had some reservations was that of church politics. As noted earlier, in the 1640s and 1650s, women began playing an active role in religious affairs by preaching, prophesying and writing, particularly in connection with the Quaker movement. Missionary movements were carried out, including one which involved two women attempting to proselytise the 'Grand Turk'. The Ranters however suffered with the death of James Nayler who was branded in 1656 for blasphemy and died in 1660. There were a number of women involved in this movement as his supporters, one of whom was Martha Simmonds, also known to Milton. He likened Simmonds to Delilah who lured Nayler into destruction. Therefore, his later agreement with the doctrine that women should remain silent in church, Hill suggests, is most likely a reflection of his disapproval of women's involvement in politics.³⁹

Thus far, opinions and interpretations of women's position as laid down in the Bible have largely been viewed through male eyes. In response, female authorship also made its presence felt in an attempt at 'redeeming Eve' and providing alternative interpretations to the oft-repeated accusation burdening Eve (and consequently womankind) with the blame for the Fall.

As the Reformation gained momentum, women were gradually encouraged to speak out in support of their faith as all the support that could be gathered was needed in such crucial times and women on their part were quick in seizing this opportunity towards greater participation in religious life. The

³⁸ Hill uses this incident as yet another means of defending Milton from the accusation of being the campaigner for male superiority and authority. C. Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*, pp. 128, 129. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Books IV, X.

³⁹ C. Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*, pp. 135, 136. Simmonds is seen as being the main cause of Nayler's undoing since she was actively involved in church politics and made independent decisions which proved to be not only fatal at the time for the idea of religious toleration, but also for women's involvement as a whole in this sphere.

sixteenth century⁴⁰ therefore was rife with sermons, doctrines and domestic manuals which preached the silence and obedience of all women. The Virgin Mary was seen as the redemption of womankind from the follies of Eve and it was this depiction of the domesticated and silent version of Mary which was internalised by most women of the time.⁴¹ As Marina Warner has shown, the convert to Christianity Justin Martyr (100-165) in *Dialogue with Trypho* extended St. Paul's description of Christ as the second Adam who was 'reborn pure and incorrupt – indeed virgin' (1 Corinthians 15:22, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 5:14) to the Virgin Mary, thereby supporting the notion of Mary as the second Eve and the 'mother of all the living in a new spiritual sense.'⁴²

Elaine Beilin's work titled *Redeeming Eve* provides insight into understanding how intellectual women reacted to negative views of women. Retaliation often took the form of an outburst curtailed by a conscious desire to maintain the foundations of Christian female virtue and decorum. Chastity and obedience to authority (in the form of the Church, God or husband) were the constituents of the Christian ideal.⁴³ As emphasized by Patricia Crawford, religious beliefs in early modern England were gendered and therefore it was these beliefs which determined the interaction of the sexes. Although this portrayal of women as obedient to authority may not gel with modern ideas of emancipation, for early modern women it was the primary medium of depicting themselves as good Christians. By doing so, they transcended the position to which they were relegated in the earthly world, and depicted themselves on a par with (if not on a higher plane than) men in the spiritual nexus.⁴⁴

In early sixteenth-century England, women like Margaret Roper equated learning and virtue in women with silence and modesty, in keeping with teachings in the Bible:

⁴⁰ The discussion here begins with the sixteenth century in keeping with the time frame of this study.

⁴¹ Betty Travitsky, *The Paradise of Women: Writings by Englishwomen of the Renaissance* (New York, 1989), p. 18.

⁴² Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London, 2000), pp. 59-60.

⁴³ Elaine Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton, 1987), pp. xiii, xiv, xv, xvi, xix. Some examples of learned and virtuous sixteenth-century women were the daughters of Sir Thomas More and Anthony Cooke.

⁴⁴ Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England* (London, 1993), pp. 2-3.

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection....But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. (1Timothy 2:11-12).⁴⁵

On the other hand, Anne Askew used the tactic of defiance of authority, be it husband or Church, to endorse her opinions publicly in favour of her Protestant faith. In doing so, she consciously defied the conventional restrictions that burdened her sex. She appeared to be ahead of her time since her fiery protestations were not well received and she was one of the early converts to Protestantism who was burnt at the stake in 1546 at the age of 25. Her life had been short but highly influential. Her writings which placed quotations from the Bible in perspective defied the traditional dictum of women's exclusion from the field of religious writings. Therefore, it is likely that she set a precedent for women's religious works in the century ahead.⁴⁶

Beilin devotes her concluding chapter to the reactions of seventeenth-century female authors to the incessant jeers and jocular taunts of men through the preceding centuries. Unlike their sixteenth-century counterparts, seventeenth-century authors used inherent feminine Christian virtues to counter negative perceptions of women. Seventeenth-century female authors wrote works in defence of women as well as mother's manuals. As Beilin points out, both genres attempted to 'redeem woman by idealizing her.' The authors who wrote in defence of women specifically had a masculine audience in mind since their works were usually in response to specific masculine comments or pamphlets, while the authors of manuals wrote with children and other women as their focused audience. The defenders of women came across as aggressive and at times impertinent, while manual authors adopted a passive and pious attitude.⁴⁷

Four women stood out in the field of authorship in the defence of women: Jane Anger, who wrote *Protection for Women* in 1589 in response to a pamphlet by a 'late Surfeiting Lover'; Rachel Speght, who penned *A Mouzell*

⁴⁵ Elaine Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, p. 29. Also see Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*, p. 120.

⁴⁶ Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, pp. 29, 47.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 252. The authors of mother's manuals will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

for *Melastomus* in 1617; Ester Sowernam, who also in 1617 wrote *Ester hath hang'd Haman*, and Constantia Munda who authored *The Worming of a mad Dogge*, once again written in 1617. As Beilin states, 'each created a persona who could argue, assume for herself a hitherto prohibited authority, and develop a strategy of confrontation.'⁴⁸

Very little is known about Jane Anger apart from the publication of her work in 1589 and the likelihood that she did not use a pseudonym as the poem attributed to Jo Anger at the end of her work was possibly that by a relative. Born in 1597, Rachel Speght was the daughter of a Calvinist minister and was the first writer in defence of women to undoubtedly write under her own name. Debate is ongoing as to Ester Sowernam's identity and gender. Using a pseudonym, it is unclear whether the author was a woman convinced in her argument for the defence of her gender or a man who either wished to project a female perspective or merely to profit from the popular debate and discussions on the redemption of womankind. Although like Ester Sowernam, Constantia Munda's (pseudo) gender is in doubt particularly because of her profuse knowledge of Greek, Latin and Italian works, the dedication of the work to 'The Right Worshipful Lady her most deare Mother, the Lady Prudentia Munda' and reference to 'her writing hand' suggests the likelihood that she belonged to an aristocratic family which would in turn, explain her knowledge of the classical languages.⁴⁹

As noted, the guilt of Eve had been the focus of much negativity through the ages and therefore Jane Anger's treatment of Eve is interesting. Since man

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 252.

⁴⁹ For details on all four authors see Anne Lake Prescott, 'Anger, Jane (fl. 1588)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39675>, accessed 6 Oct 2006; Barbara K. Lewalski, 'Speght, Rachel (b. 1597?)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/45825>, accessed 6 Oct 2006; Elspeth Graham, 'Sowernam, Ester (fl. 1617)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/46922>, accessed 6 Oct 2006 and Susan Gushee O'Malley, 'Munda, Constantia (fl. 1617)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/46913>, accessed 6 Oct 2006. As was evident from sixteenth-century aristocratic women, a high degree of education incorporating the classical languages was prevalent particularly in the families of the scholars of the time who tapped the potential of their daughters as well as their sons through education. As it was only as the seventeenth century advanced that the emphasis on the curriculum set out for women altered, it is therefore still likely that Constantia Munda (pseudo) may have taken advantage of a well-rounded education.

was perceived as purified through his creation from dust, woman had achieved an even higher level of purification since she had obtained her existence from man. In her words:

From woman sprang man's salvation. A woman was the first that beleev'd, and a woman likewise the first that repented of sin. In women is onely true Fidelity (except in her) there is no constancie, and without her no Huswifery.⁵⁰

She emphasized virtuousness which was personified in the Virgin Mary:

Ther is no wisdome but it comes by grace' and since the Virgin Mary was the first to receive grace, she argued that 'women are wiser than men.'⁵¹

Therefore, her overall portrayal of women was that 'of a virtuous, chaste sex, maligned and mistreated by wicked men'. It is important to note that although her anger is toned down towards the end of the work, the persona of Anger provided women with a new identity and her work was used as a foundation for subsequent female authorship. Jane Anger's outrage in response to male negativity towards women was clear and she emphasized the hypocrisy of men and the virtuous character of women. Her method was a traditional one whereby she stated examples and instances from the classical age, but her style is non-traditional in that it did not reflect the restraint exercised by her predecessors. The persona of Anger which was adopted by her was certainly a novel addition to the body of female rhetoric. Through her linguistic weaponry she attacked negative male rhetoric aimed at women and justified women by portraying their chasteness rather than attempting a change. She observed that women were assigned virtues and speculated as to the absence of virtues in men. Her explanation for male authority over women was the overpowering desire of the former to compensate for their own inadequacies and the positive qualities of women. The portrayal of an aggressive image and the Christian ideal of silence and passivity was

⁵⁰ Jane Anger, *A Protection of Women, 1589* in Betty Travitsky and Patrick Cullen (eds), *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works, Part 1: Printed Writings, 1500-1640, volume 4, Defences of Women: Jane Anger, Rachel Speght, Ester Sowernam and Constantia Munda* (Scholar, 1996), C-Cv.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, C2.

however a conflict which writing women had to reconcile with; the idea of a silent and virtuous woman did not coincide particularly with this persona of Anger. However, it was this Anger that was ironically used to reinstate the virtuousness of women.⁵²

Rachel Speght's work was inspired by Joseph Swetnam's offensive writings on *The Araignment of Lewd, idle, forward, and unconstant women*, which was an attack on women of all classes, written in 1615. Speght counteracted Swetnam's arguments by redeeming Eve and idealizing her descendents. She stated that the fault did not entirely lie with Eve for women were inherently endowed with positive qualities. Her argument that Satan preyed on Eve rather than Adam on account of woman's physical and moral weakness is an interesting one, since she admitted the often repeated assault on women's weak morality. She stated that 'Yet we shall find the offence of *Adam* and *Eve* almost to parallel: For as an ambitious desire of being made like unto God, was the motive which caused her to eate, so likewise was it his.'⁵³ Speght also wrote that if Eve had erred, then it was Adam's error not to have corrected her. Instead, he followed in her footsteps and therefore shared the blame. Moreover, the consequent punishment meted out to Eve by God was 'particular to her owne sex, and to none but the female kinde: but for the sinne of man the whole earth was cursed.'⁵⁴ She argued that God bestowed upon woman the means to salvation for the woman would issue forth a Saviour; that Saviour being Christ as we learn later. Her counter argument to the male assertion that St. Paul also advocated keeping women at a distance was his simultaneous assertion 'that male and female are all one in Christ Jesus.' In *Mouzell Melastomus* (1617) she regarded Eve as the bone of Adam's bone and the flesh of his flesh, thereby emphasizing their equality and the degree to which woman was a part of man as opposed to an external being meant only to be owned and commanded over.⁵⁵

⁵² Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, p. 253.

⁵³ Rachel Speght, *A Mouzell for Melastomus*, in Betty Travitsky and Patrick Cullen (eds), *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works*, p 4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 5.

⁵⁵ For details of the defence authors see Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, pp. 247, 248, 250-255. Also see N.H. Keeble, *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman*, pp. 4,6,8,9,12.

The significance of Speght's argument also lay in the fact that although she emphasized the spiritual equality of women, she passively accepted the inequalities that women were subjected to in the field of politics and society. Moreover, since woman was created from 'neare his (Adam's) heart, to be his equall; that where he is Lord; she may be Lady'⁵⁶ they were meant to rule together over other creatures below them (Genesis 1:26). By quoting examples of women close to Christ such as Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, Susanna and Joanna, she emphasized the primary duty of all women, namely, the glorification of God. Women should be seen by men as helpers and not the sex on whom the entire burden of domestic responsibilities are laden. She tried to justify women's earthly subjection to men by highlighting their lofty spirituality and virtue.⁵⁷

Esther Sowernam, like Rachel Speght, was also spurred on towards the defence of women after reading Joseph Swetnam's pamphlet. Sowernam not only attempted to redeem women in the spiritual and intellectual context, but also aimed to achieve respect for women by men in practical terms of matrimony. According to her, there could be no love between the couple unless there was mutual respect and the latter could not be attained in the face of continuing negative rhetoric allocating all blame on women as the descendents of Eve. Like her contemporaries, she endeavoured to reclaim the dignity of women by emphasizing their virtue rather than raising the state of marriage to a pedestal. Her redemption of Eve included the argument that since men were composed of dust and clay, they had a 'dirty, muddy disposition', while women embodied the spirit of God and had fewer crooked ribs than man. She suggested that God had created woman to perfect the hitherto imperfections in man so as to complete him. In other words, woman complemented man; without her, he was both incomplete and imperfect.⁵⁸ Describing woman as a 'Paradician Creature',⁵⁹ she absolves her character of ever being tainted or being subject to deterioration. The faltering in this

⁵⁶ Speght, *Mouzell for Melastomus*, p. 10.

⁵⁷ Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, p. 256.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 258-260. Also see Keeble, *Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman*, pp. 4,6,8,9,12.

⁵⁹ Ester Sowernam, *Ester Hath Hang'd Haman or An Answer to a Lewd Pamphlet, entitled, The Arraignment of Women*, in Betty Travitsky and Patrick Cullen (eds), *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works*, A4.

respect was caused, in her opinion, on account of a 'Serpent of the masculine gender'.⁶⁰ The argument was carried further by suggesting that if sin had its beginnings in Eve, it reached its 'fullness in man'.⁶¹ Moreover, while St. Paul's words were used by men against women, Sowernam used his declarations to prove otherwise. For instance, she referred to the statements, 'By one mans sinne death came into this world' and 'All die in Adam' to exemplify the fact that guilt for the Fall did not lie exclusively with Eve. On the contrary, although Eve was punished by the pains of childbirth, Sowernam highlights the positive outcome: 'Yet what by fruit she lost, by fruit she shall recover'. She also explains woman's command to obey as a Christian virtue. In her words:

She is commanded to obey her husband; the cause is, the more to encrease her glorie. Obedience is better than Sacrifice: for nothing is more acceptable before God than to obey.⁶²

Sowernam described women as 'God's instruments' embodying both physical as well as spiritual 'fruitfulness'. Revisiting the Old Testament, she highlighted the fact that women were unstintingly firm in their devotion to God and that the promise of the birth and death of the 'Saviour' had been linked inextricably to women.

Women like Ester Sowernam did not attempt to improve the lot of women by presenting an altered model of feminine behaviour, but idealized the traditional model of womankind and replaced it with that of Eve (the sinner). Neither the authors nor the audiences were ready to challenge the scriptures in print. Although the authors of such defence works extolled the feminine Christian virtues of chastity, modesty and silence, they were also conscious that the very act of writing such works violated these virtues. Therefore, they attempted to reconcile this contradiction by emphasizing their obedience to and acceptance of male authority and superiority.

In *The Worming of a Mad Dogge*, Constantia Munda reiterated the virtuousness of women's silence but at the same time emphasized the need to

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 7.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 8.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 9.

break that silence in order to defend their chastity from slander. In other words, the same virtues which were exalted in the female sex must be violated by women so as to highlight them in the face of male assault.⁶³

The redemption of Eve was also clear and strong in Aemilia Lanyer's words,

But surely Adam cannot be excused,
Her fault though great, yet he was most to blame;
What weakness offered, strength might have refused,
Being Lord of all, the greater was his shame.⁶⁴

This argument was in keeping with the representation of women as the 'weaker vessel' in the King James Bible as well as in sermons and works from the sixteenth century onwards. The notion of female weakness also extended to the moral context. Antonia Fraser points out that the generally believed (by members of both sexes) moral inferiority of women had two implications: first, the notion that women were morally inferior as the descendents of their 'Grandmother' Eve, the sinner and, second, that this moral weakness resulted in a natural inclination towards temptation and therefore lower accountability for their sins as compared to men, who were perceived as the moral pillars of society.⁶⁵

⁶³ Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, pp. 260, 261, 263-5. Her attack on Swetnam was also harsh and carried out on similar lines as her predecessors with the redemption of Eve constituting its basis. It should be noted that some authors such as Simon Shepherd and Ann Rosalind Jones have challenged the natural assumption that Constantia Munda was indeed a woman, while others such as Barbara Lewalski have expressed similar concerns where Esther Sowerham is concerned. For details of their arguments see Valerie Wayne, 'The Death of the Author: Anonymity's Allies and Swetnam the Woman-hater' in Susan Frye and Karen Robertson (eds), *Maids and Mistresses, Courtiers and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 224-5.

⁶⁴ Aemilia Lanyer, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* in *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works. Printed Writings, 1500-1640. Part 2, v.10. The Poets I: Isabella Whitney, Anne Dowriche, Elizabeth Melville (Colville); Aemilia Lanyer, Rachel Speght, Diana Primrose, Anne, Mary and Penelope Grey*, introduced by Susanne Woods, Betty S. Travitsky, and Patrick Cullen (Aldershot, 2001), stanzas 97-98, p. D. Her further redemption of Eve is perceived through the following lines on the same page:

'Although the serpents craft had her abuse,
God's holy word ought all his actions frame,
For he was Lord and King of all the earth,
Before poore Eve had either life or breath.'

⁶⁵ Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel: Woman's Lot in Seventeenth-century England* (London, 1984), pp. 1-2.

2) Interpretations of Women's Status in the Qur'an and Perception of Women's Spirituality:-

Islam, which took root in the seventh century, in theory proposed the uplift of women's status, not only spiritually but also legally, socially and economically. Spiritual equality of the sexes is evident in numerous verses throughout the text of the Qur'an. Men and women are promised Paradise if they are virtuous in this life and follow the teachings of the Qur'an (Qur'an 33:35). A woman, in Islam, is regarded as 'Muhsana' or fortress against Satan, rather than 'an instrument of the Devil'. Prophet Muhammad proclaimed, 'The world and all things in the world are precious but the most precious thing in the world is a virtuous woman', and also said that 'women are the twin halves of men'. The *Sharia* (Islamic law) emphasizes the biological distinctions between men and women which consequently give rise to differences in the roles played by each sex. Women have been assigned sole charge of their homes, which are of pivotal significance in bringing about a structured and peaceful existence. However, this does not signify a decrease in the status of women. 'According to the *Sharia* man and woman are equal as human beings and have an equal number of mutual obligations and rights'. She is spiritually and intellectually on a par with man. Khurram Murad, in his discussion of women's roles in the *Sharia* explains this matter clearly by saying that equality is not synonymous with similarity and it is when these are equated that the problems arise.⁶⁶

Raising women to a status of equality with men and empowering them with rights resulted in the safeguard of their interests, be it marriage, divorce or inheritance. Even though the nature of the marriage contract or *Nikaah* is civil, as it requires the consent of both parties, the resultant relationship is sacred since the bond of marriage theoretically steers men towards and keeps them on the path of piety and is described by the Qur'an as a 'covenant' (Qur'an 4:21). A virtuous woman is seen as instrumental in preventing the wavering of husbands from the Word of God.⁶⁷ The Qur'an portrays married men and

⁶⁶ Khurram Murad, *Sharia The Way of Justice* (The Islamic Foundation, 1981), pp. 10-12. For details on the *Sharia* see pp. 3, 8-12. Also see, Abdul Rahman Doi, *Women in the Quran and the Sunna* (London, 1988), p. 9.

⁶⁷ Similar sentiments are echoed in verses 1-6 from 1 Peter 3 of the Bible. The concept of the wife bringing her husband 'home from error' is also cited in Gervase Markham's seventeenth-century

women as garments, protecting each other from in chastity (Qur'an 7:189). Mutual consent is an important part of marriage (Qur'an 4:3), although male guardians also have the right to arrange the marriages of their minor children. It should be noted however that the consent of wives is not necessary if their husbands wished to marry again. Wives are also given a nuptial gift or *Mahr* by their husband over whom they have full control as protection in the event of a divorce.⁶⁸

Where female inheritance is concerned, daughters are entitled to inherit one-third of their father's property, while their brothers receive two-thirds. If the deceased has only one daughter, she is entitled to half his wealth. The Qur'an goes into great detail as to the shares of daughters and mothers and lays down their exact shares (Qur'an 4:11). A woman can independently enter into any contract or make any bequest she wishes and is also entitled to a share of the inheritance in the capacity of her status as daughter, sister, wife and mother. This financial independence would also hold her in good stead in the event of widowhood, in addition to a yearly maintenance that she would be entitled to from her deceased husband.

The acknowledged physical weakness of women however makes it necessary for the stronger male relative to fulfil his responsibility of protecting them.⁶⁹ The ambiguity in the degree of and manner in which this protection is in fact extended beyond physical terms is perhaps the root of differing interpretations of the status of Muslim women.

manual *The English Housewife*. See Michael Roberts, "To bridle the falsehood of unconscionable workmen, and for her own satisfaction": what the Jacobean housewife needed to know about men's work, and why' in *Labour History Review*, 63.1 Spring 1998, p. 7.

⁶⁸ Zeenat Shaukat Ali, *The Empowerment of Women in Islam, With Special Reference to Marriage and Divorce* (Mumbai, 1996), pp. 187, 210, 218-19, 226, 251-269. Since the concept of Eve deriving her existence from Adam's rib is absent in Islam, husbands are not perceived as 'heads' of their wives, although they are the heads of their families. Therefore, the individuality of wives remains. (Qur'an 2:228). For details on divorce see pp. 302-42. Wives have the right to initiate a divorce, known as *Hul* or *Khul'*, in the event of which they would have to forfeit their *Mahr*. Remarriage after divorce or widowhood is permissible. Qur'an 2:240.

⁶⁹ Muhammad also preached kindness and respect towards women saying, 'The best of you are they who behave best to their wives', and, 'the more civil and kind a Muslim is to his wife, the more perfect in faith he is'. In this respect, see Qur'an 4:19.

Modesty is a quality highly prized and women are strongly urged to conceal their physical beauty from strangers, and this is amply revealed through verse 24:31 of the Qur'an:

And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments.

This is the verse which gave rise to the tradition of the *hijab* or veil which has today become synonymous with the seclusion of women in Muslim societies. As alluded to earlier, the distinction between the written word and actual practice appears to have played a part in the understanding and implementation of the verse above as well. While to some it is equated with segregation and seclusion, to others it is modest behaviour which is emphasized and not the non-interaction of women with the rest of the world. As Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr points out, women's sexual behaviour is as active as that of men and their sexuality is controlled rather than repressed by ensuring its activity only within the context of marriage. Veiling therefore was a means towards controlling women's sexuality and restricting it within the marital context.⁷⁰

In this respect, the highly controversial question of the *hijab* or veil has been handled by Fatima Mernissi in her book *Women and Islam* with an entirely novel perspective. She delves into the detailed background of the revelation of the first verse concerning, as she terms it, the descent of the curtain. Mernissi refers to a particular incident revolving around the marriage of

⁷⁰ Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, 'Women and the Public Eye in Eighteenth-century Istanbul', in Gavin R.G. Hambly (ed.), *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, pp. 307-8.

Prophet Muhammad to Zaynab and the lingering on of certain unwanted guests. Mernissi's interpretation is that the *hijab* (which literally translated means curtain) descended initially between two men rather than between a man and a woman. It was more a division of public and private space, namely private households from the rest of the community. Marlene Kanawati in her review of Mernissi's work has aptly argued that although challenging the authenticity of *Hadith* was acceptable, the Qur'an is considered as God's word and therefore the above-mentioned verse would also have to be perceived as such. This highlights the problem of analysing the scriptures as detailed at the outset of this chapter. The Qur'an may be the Word of God, but it has been translated and interpreted in various ways and although Mernissi's attempt to reconcile the issue of the *hijab* may be debatable, it is an interpretation which tries to argue against other interpretations of this verse which advocate the rigid adoption of the veil by all Muslim women.

Although theoretically Islam had raised the status of women by providing them with not only spiritual equality, but also the highest degree of respect in society⁷¹ and financial independence, certain clauses indicated irregularities such as the question of polygamy and the question of female witnesses for instance. A Muslim man had the right to four wives whereas the reverse was not permitted. Although all four wives were entitled to a *Mahr*⁷² and the right to initiate a divorce, their consent in their husband's remarriage was not required, which gave the husband the clear advantage over his wife. The discussion and debate on polygamy will be briefly addressed in Chapter 3.⁷³

⁷¹ Mothers commanded the most respect by their children, more than fathers. This is evident from an incident in Prophet Muhammad's lifetime wherein it was made clear that mothers commanded more respect than even fathers. See *Al-Bukhari Hadith 8.2* (narrated by Abu Hurayra) for the full account of the incident. This is highly indicative of the fact that the highest degree of respect was owed to one's mother, because, as Muhammad added, 'Paradise is under her feet'. In one instance the Prophet discouraged his follower from fighting in the battle in defence of Islam and to look after his mother instead, for he said that service to one's mother led to salvation. See I. A. R. Doi, *Women in the Qur'an*, pp. 7-8. Similarly, daughters are looked upon as blessings and as screens against the fires of Hell on the Day of Judgment. For details of the incident which resulted in this statement see I.A.R., Doi *Women in the Qur'an*, p. 7.

⁷² The *Mahr* is a nuptial gift given by the husband to his wife as a form of financial security in the event of a divorce.

⁷³ For a discussion on a defence of polygamy in Islam, including Christian perceptions of it, see M.H. Kidwai, *Woman under different social and religious laws*, pp. 26-7. Also see Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*, pp. 136-7 for Milton's view on polygamy.

Where female witnesses are concerned however, the Qur'an (2:282) states the following: '...get two witnesses out of your own men, and if there are not two men then a man and two women such as ye choose for witnesses so that if one of them errs the other can remind her.' The likelihood of unreliability in such situations instantly gives men the upper hand, not to mention the opportunity for the interpretive extension of this unreliability to other aspects of life such as unfaithfulness on the part of women and inferior intellectual abilities for instance. The seed of doubt that the relative 'unreliability' of female witnesses plants, automatically tips the balance in favour of for instance, opposing 'reliable' male witnesses, thereby resulting in a handicap from the start for the side involving female witnesses.⁷⁴

There is similar ambiguity where certain *Hadith* are concerned and like the above-mentioned verse on veiling, I feel it necessary to mention these *Hadith* as they may have been perceived at face value by seventeenth-century Ottoman society and consequently perhaps also by English narrators of Islamic traditions. If this indeed had been the case then it would have had an impact upon religious beliefs of the time. Fatima Mernissi has investigated the credibility of some of these *Hadith* said to have been voiced by Prophet Muhammad to the detriment of women. She refuses to take the fact that such statements had been made by the Prophet (a man who strove towards placing women on an equal footing as men), at face value. She goes on to prove the unlikelihood of these statements being an accurate narration by the Prophet.

The particular *Hadith* she scrutinises are as follows:-

- 1) 'Those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity',⁷⁵
- 2) 'The Prophet said that the dog, the ass, and woman interrupt prayer if they pass in front of the believer, interposing themselves between him and the *qibla*.'⁷⁶
- 3) 'Three things bring bad luck: house, woman and horse',

⁷⁴ Zeenat Shaukat Ali, *Empowerment of Women*, p. 38-40, 215-16.

⁷⁵ For a description of the *Hadith*, see Fatima Mernissi, *Women and Islam*, pp. 53-58. This *Hadith* had been recounted by Abu Bakra, who was one of the Companions of the Prophet, p. 49.

⁷⁶ The *qibla* refers to the Kaaba in Mecca towards which all Muslims face while praying.

4) 'I do not leave after me any cause of trouble more fatal to man than women'.⁷⁷

5) The Prophet was also said to have noted that Hell was dominated by women.⁷⁸

Mernissi tackles each of these *Hadith* separately, delving into their background and context. In doing so, she argues that these *Hadith* were either misquoted or misinterpreted by their transmitters. Therefore, if Mernissi's argument is to be accepted, then even the most widely accepted collection of *Hadith* should be scrutinised in further detail in spite of it having undergone this process already, prior to its compilation. Mernissi's arguments however, although in parts logical, can be the basis for extensive debate. The probable reason for the occasional inability on Mernissi's part to provide an entirely convincing argument in this respect perhaps lies in the reluctance of the reader to doubt al-Bukhari's most trustworthy collection known as *Sahih Bukhari*.⁷⁹ Although the authenticity of the collection of *Hadith* cannot be entirely proved, al-Bukhari's collection is viewed as the most reliable source of Prophetic sayings on account of his close sixteen-year scrutiny into their authenticity and background and reliability of their narrators.⁸⁰ Although it is very tempting at times to be swayed in favour of Mernissi's every argument since they conveniently reduce the controversy, pondering over them leaves one with a series of related questions with no straightforward answers. What is clear is that the tendency of Muslims to often place *Hadith* next in importance only to the Qur'an increases the likelihood that *Hadith* were

⁷⁷ Fatima Mernissi, *Women and Islam*, pp. 70, 75, 76, 78-80.

⁷⁸ This *Hadith* is of particular importance in the discussion of women's souls and their place in the afterlife which will be explored in Chapter 2.

⁷⁹ *Sahih Bukhari* is considered to be the most authentic collection of Prophetic traditions and sayings collected by the Persian scholar Muhammad Ibn Ismail al-Bukhari (810-870) from Bukhara. He is said to have travelled through the Abbasid Empire and meticulously collected these traditions over sixteen years eventually including only 2602 out of the original over 300,000 traditions he had initially amassed. The first version of his collection was circulated during his lifetime after which he made minor changes to it. The *Hadith* is considered as a guide in daily life and as a means of waylaying doubts or vagaries that might arise while reading the Qur'an. It should be noted however that although *Sunni* scholars accept *Sahih Bukhari* as authentic, *Shia* scholars only accept some of the traditions quoted claiming that al-Bukhari deliberately filtered out Prophetic traditions which supported the *Shia* point of view. See "Bukhari, al" *Encyclopædia Britannica* 2007, *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, 10 Dec 2007, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/artic>

⁸⁰ *Ibid*. This aspect of proving the authenticity is entirely outside the boundaries of this current study and neither do I possess the necessary expertise to carry out such an investigation.

accepted as Prophetic sayings without questioning their authenticity in detail. And if this was the case in early modern Ottoman society, then it would have affected male opinion of women.

Keeping this in mind, it is clear that the above *Hadith* were contradictory to the Qur'an, according to which women were revered. What is evident though is that religious scriptures and traditions are undoubtedly highly susceptible to varied interpretations and misquotation, which can completely reverse their intended meaning and purpose, and therefore alter the way in which a society functions. Therefore, a likely explanation for the presence of the *Hadith* under discussion in *Sahih Bukhari* is that they were probably voiced by the Prophet but in particular contexts which, if quoted separately in the absence of their appropriate context, could very well be utilized and interpreted as sacred words to the detriment of women. Hence, if we go along with this hypothesis, then it could also explain their presence in *Sahih Bukhari*. In fact, as detailed earlier, this argument can also be applied to the New Testament. Biblical sayings quoted out of context affect not only their interpretation but also in turn impact the functioning of societies based on Christianity.

Religions are generally comprised of, amongst other things, a set of prescribed rules of conduct as laid down through scriptures and Prophets. Since these rules were established in an age with which we can barely identify, it is often very tempting to alter and modify some of them in order to suit present conditions. However, the Qur'an is said to be applicable to all ages and centuries irrespective. Although certain peripheral aspects may be open to slight modifications, the basic tenets of Islam remain steadfast. Therefore, one must be wary of the various interpretations of the original text, which in itself is not an easy task. Languages, like societies, evolve through the ages in order to adapt to surrounding circumstances and hence it is absolutely essential that, in the first place, the scholar interpreting a religious text of this kind is an expert in the Arabic language as it was spoken in the sixth and seventh centuries or in first-century Hebrew/Aramaic in the Biblical context. However, although some of the seventeenth-century interpretations of the Qur'an, *Hadith* and the Bible (either misquoted or interpreted differently)

might appear to be disharmonious with interpretations today, there is a strong possibility that those seventeenth-century interpretations were taken at face value by the Ottomans and the English and were the basis on which some of their beliefs and opinions were moulded.

3) English perceptions of Islam and Ottoman women:-

As Islam became an increasing threat to the Christian world in the centuries following its inception, interest in Islam gained momentum and negative perceptions and portrayals of Muslims and Islam became common. The eighth century had witnessed Muslim expansion as far as the Iberian peninsular which in turn had introduced into Europe not only first-hand interaction with an alien religion but also a racially diverse people ranging from the North African Berbers to the Middle Eastern Arabs, all of whom were categorised as the Moors. The legacy of the Moors in Spain was multi-fold ranging from distinctive architectural design to scientific, mathematical, linguistic literary and other intellectual knowledge. The Reconquista in Spain which ended in 1492 did not succeed in eradicating Moorish influence and legacy as most of the original Moorish settlers in Spain intermarried with the native population and a large section of the inhabitants in southern Spain therefore could trace their ancestry back to the Moors. This initial exposure of Europe to Islam and Muslims had spawned the first cultural and racial stereotypes and associations which lingered amongst European Christians as they began encountering the Muslims of North Africa and the Near and Middle East, such as the Turks.

By early medieval times, the threat of Islam became real and the expansion of Islam sparked off the crusades between the Christian and Islamic worlds, encouraged by church leaders (including the Pope), monarchs and intellectuals alike. Violence in the form of holy wars was justified as the wars were believed to be in defence of Christianity. The gusto of the crusades

however faded towards the end of the medieval period as doubts about the justification of violence in the name of religion arose.⁸¹

As the Ottomans began inching towards the European Continent, fresh concern arose amongst European inhabitants. In 1575, Thomas Newton in his English translation of Curione's *Sarracenicae Historiae* stated in his dedication:

They (the Saracens and Turks) were...at the very first very far from our clime and region, and therefore the less to be feared, but now they are even at our doors and ready to come into our houses.⁸²

Christian study of Islam and its doctrines continued with new fervour in order to protect Christianity from the potentially dangerous impact of the rival faith, to abate its spread and to attempt conversions of Muslims to Christianity. Therefore, much of the resultant polemic on Islam was written with a negative overtone so as to downplay it and highlight the virtues of Christianity, despite there being at their disposal better knowledge of Islam.⁸³

With the Reformation also came a division of Christian polemic on Islam into Protestant and Catholic opinion. Some Catholics for instance categorised Protestantism and Islam as equally heretical religions and even on occasion saw Muhammad as one of the first Protestants, and therefore denounced Islam. In 1536 Cardinal Reginald Pole in his anti-Protestant rhetoric compared the Protestants to the Turks:

new turkes be rysen and sprong up amongst us at home. For what other thing ar the turkes than a certain secte of christians, which in time past have shrounk and gone away from the catholyke church...? The orygynall and begynyng of the turkes relygion is all one with all other heresydes.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History* (London, 1987), pp. xxviii-xxix, xxvii.

⁸² Daniel Vitkus, "Early Modern Orientalism: Representations of Islam in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Europe" in David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto (eds), *Western View of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, Perception of Other* (New York, 1999), p. 211.

⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 208.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 213.

Some Protestants on the other hand, at times either likened their principles to Islamic doctrines or then whole-heartedly denounced Islam as and when it suited their needs.⁸⁵ They considered the Turks to be a means by which God was inflicting punishment on the Papists and secretly hoped that a day would come when both Turk and Catholic would destroy each other leaving behind a religious vacuum which would then swiftly be filled by the Protestants.⁸⁶ For Luther the 'Antichrist was 'the Pope and the Turk together. A beast full of life must have a body and soul. The spirit or soul of Antichrist is the Pope, his flesh and body the Turk.' According to him, 'The Turks are the people of the wrath of God.'⁸⁷ Thus Catholicism and Islam at times, were considered as equal enemies of Protestantism. The tone of hate and fear persisted as was aptly illustrated in the ordering of the regular reading of a thanksgiving message by the Archbishop of Canterbury after the lifting of the siege of Malta in 1565, which referred to Islam's Prophet as:

that wicked monster and damned soul Mahomet' and the Turks as 'our sworn and most deadly enemies the Turks, Infidels, and Miscreants...who by all tyranny and cruelty labour utterly to root out not only true religion, but also the very name and memory of Christ our only saviour, and all Christianity.

Muhammad was often depicted as an idol or then denounced as a renegade or impostor who spread his fraudulent and heretical religion through violence. This was reflected clearly in a tract by William Bedwell, one of the first Arabists, *Mahommedis Imposturare: That is, A Discovery of the Manifold Forgeries, Falsehoods, and horrible impieties of the blasphemous seducer Muhammad: with a demonstration of the insufficiency of his law, contained in the cursed Alkoran* in 1615.⁸⁸ In his account of his Turkish experience, the traveller George Sandys (1578-1644) in 1637 wrote authoritatively of Islam:

it is farced with fables, visions, Legends and relations. Nor is it at this day the same that was writte by *Mahomet*, (although so

⁸⁵ For instance, the apparent brotherhood of Protestantism and Islam was used by Queen Elizabeth I in the sixteenth century in order to solicit Ottoman assistance against their 'common' Catholic enemy, Spain.

⁸⁶ Vitkus, "Early Modern Orientalism", p. 211.

⁸⁷ Martin Luther, *The Table talk of Martin Luther*, translated and edited by William Hazlitt (Christian Focus Publications, 2003), 429 p. 285 and 875 p. 458.

⁸⁸ Vitkus, "Early Modern Orientalism", pp. 210, 217.

credited to be by the vulgar) many things being secretly put in, and thrust out; and some of the repugnancies reconciled by the succeeding *Caliphs*. *Mahomet* the second is said to have altered it much, and added much to it.⁸⁹

Sandys' assertion would have perhaps held true of the *Hadith* and it is possible that he extended the addition of the *Hadith* after Muhammed's death to the main text of the Qur'an itself. Such assumed assertions and interpretations about the authorship of the Qur'an and Islam in general continued as the seventeenth century advanced. In 1678 Thomas Smith reasserted the fortune of all Christians in the following words:

If a thread of a Churchman be perceived to run through the whole Relation, being more convinced of the brutish ignorance and horrid barbarousness of follies of their worship, you may the more thankfully and seriously reflect upon that most blessed and merciful providence which has cast your lot in Christendom.⁹⁰

Christian study of Arabic (and translations from Arabic into Latin for instance) which had been initiated in Spain particularly from the eleventh century onwards, diminished around the thirteenth century.⁹¹ Arabic studies thereafter regained prominence with renewed vigour only in the sixteenth century and became stronger still during the seventeenth century particularly in England and Holland. In terms of scholarship, Arabic had been studied for some time as a means of communicating with Muslim scholars and scientists on a more secular level. Furthermore, Levantine commercial activity also made it imperative for them to obtain a flavour of the local habits and traditions of the people with whom they were engaged in trade.⁹²

Arabic studies had been undertaken by the Catholics in the fifteenth century and the Vatican library also contained some Arabic manuscripts. It was

⁸⁹ George Sandys, *A relation of a iourney* (London, 1637), p. 54.

⁹⁰ Ezel Kural Shaw and C.J. Heywood, *English and Continental Views of the Ottoman Empire, 1500-1800: papers read at a Clark Library Seminar, January 24, 1970* (Los Angeles, 1972), p. 18. Thomas Smith, *Remarks upon the manners, religion, and government of the Turks. Together with a survey of the seven churches of Asia* (London, 1678), 'To the Reader', pp. iii-iv.

⁹¹ Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies* (London, 2006), pp. 24-32.

⁹² Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 73, 85, 86. For an overview of Arabic studies and the comprehension of Islam in Europe see Franco Cardini, *Europe and Islam*, translated by Caroline Beamish (Oxford, 2001), pp. 167-172.

believed that the understanding of Arabic was important for the undertaking of Hebrew and Aramaic translations in polyglot Bibles. Although authors such as Francesco Petrarch (1304-74) and the Florentine Pico della Mirandola (1463-94) in as early as the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had denounced Arabic as a language and its literary corpus, they did acknowledge some works by Arabic thinkers. Therefore although Arabic had been condemned it was still considered as useful for scholarly purposes. The Italian-born French-resident Joseph Scaliger however not only emphasised the importance of learning Arabic for its own sake rather than purely for the facilitation of the better understanding of Hebrew, but also established the first Chair of Arabic in Leiden in 1600. As Robert Irwin has shown while the sixteenth-century European Arabists were Catholic and amateurs, the seventeenth-century dedicated Arabists were largely Protestant churchmen such as Archbishop William Laud and William Bedwell (1563-1632) or academics like Edward Pococke (1604-91).⁹³ William Bedwell also published the English translation of an anti-Islamic dialogue, accompanied by *The Arabian Trudgman*, an explanation of Islamic terms (1615).⁹⁴ The Professorship of Arabic established by Laud in Oxford in 1636 was first taken over by Edward Pococke. He had been a student of Bedwell but soon surpassed his teacher and became the most renowned Orientalist of the seventeenth century in England.⁹⁵ The Chair of Arabic at Cambridge however had preceded that in Oxford by four years and had been established by Thomas Adams, Lord Mayor of London. The first occupant was Abraham Wheelocke (1593-1653). Like many of his colleagues, Wheelocke was interested in Arabic in order to establish links with and to influence Eastern Christians in Oriental lands since Eastern Christians were often seen as potential allies against the Catholics.⁹⁶

Increase in Levantine trade resulted in a spate of narratives and travelogues by merchants and diplomats, which not only noted their personal experiences in the exotic lands, but also often had accounts of the 'Turkish' religion as the

⁹³ Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, pp. 55, 58-9, 74-5, 82-3, 85, 86, 87.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 87 and Alastair Hamilton, 'Bedwell, William (bap. 1563, d. 1632)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1942>, accessed 6 Oct 2006.

⁹⁵ Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, p. 93.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 98.

instance of George Sandys' account mentioned above clearly demonstrates. These accounts, such as those of William Biddulph, George Sandys, Paul Rycaut, Aaron Hill and others, not only often contained several similarities in the description of certain customs and traditions, but also comprised inaccurate information, which was then used as the perfect means to denigrate Islam and its followers, all in one sweep.⁹⁷ The writer and entrepreneur Aaron Hill (1685-1750), for one described the Turks as following the 'dangerous Tenets' of an 'impure Religion' in the account of his stay in Istanbul.⁹⁸ As Jonathan Riley-Smith has pointed out, the popularity and justifiability of the crusades had come into question in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries⁹⁹ and one may therefore even perceive this written rhetoric against Islam as a figurative assault on Muslims comprising an alternative to a policy of direct violence. It is however essential to note that the writing of travel narratives appeared to not only follow certain formulae but also tended to cater to an implicit or explicit demand by readers of the time for certain fanciful notions of the Orient which may have been dissonant with personal experiences.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the political events and atmosphere of the country at the time of writing and the patron who had facilitated the sponsorship of the travel and the publication of the narrative all played a part in the flavour that the narrative acquired.

These narratives also invariably spoke authoritatively about Turkish women, the information about whom was almost certainly based on hearsay since access to the harems was prohibited. What is noteworthy is that their accounts albeit detailed, were written with a largely male perspective as many of them either do not mention women at all, or then add a couple of lines on

⁹⁷ Kenneth Parker ed., *Early Modern Tales of Orient*, p. 11. William Biddulph for instance wrote: 'Hereby readers may learn to love and reverence their pastors, and to thank God for the inestimable benefit of the preaching of the Word amongst them, when they shall read in what blindness and palpable ignorance other nations live, not knowing the right hand from the left in matters that concern the kingdom of Heaven, and yet reverence and honour their blind guides and superstitious churchmen like angels, and provide for their maintenance royally.' See William Biddulph, *Travels into Africa, Asia and to the Blacke Sea, London 1609*, in *The English Experience, its record in early printed books published in facsimile*, no. 22 (New York, 1968), A2.

⁹⁸ Aaron Hill, *A full and just account of the present of the Ottoman empire in all its Branches* (London, 1709), p. 46.

⁹⁹ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *Crusades*, p. 255.

¹⁰⁰ Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, pp. 52-3.

women and religion at the end of their entire discussion, clearly implying that women are not worthy subjects of a separate discussion where religion is concerned. The Venetian ambassador to Istanbul, Ottaviano Bon wrote in his description of the sultan's seraglio in 1650:

As for the women, there is no heed taken, or reckoning made of their religion at all; therefore I speak of it last, but for modesty sake, I must conceale what the Turkes are not ashamed sometimes to Judge of them. For they never go to Church, so that if they happily have a will to pray at the hours of prayer, they do it in their own houses, using the same preparations as the men do. Nevertheless their honesty, and good carriage is much looked after; the *Imawms* of every parish being bound to harken diligently after their deportment: who if they discover anything that is amiss, must reveal it to their husbands, that they may put them away if they will; or else to their fathers, or kindred (if they be unmarried) that they may take some course for to reform them.¹⁰¹

While Thomas Dallam (approx. 1575-1630, sent to Constantinople in 1599 to assemble an organ which was a gift from Queen Elizabeth I to the Sultan) wrote 'they never goo to church, or other prayers, as the men dothe', George Sandys, on a similar note declared:

Now the women are not permitted to come into their temples) yet have they secret places to looke in thorow grates) partly for troubling their devotions, but especially for that they are not excised, as are the women of *Persia* and *Aethiopia*.¹⁰²

The secretary to the then English ambassador to Turkey, Heneage Finch, Earl of Winchilsea, Paul Rycaut (1629-1700) in his *Present State of the Ottoman Empire* sweepingly proclaimed that Turkish women possessed 'no principles of virtue of moral honesty or Religion',¹⁰³ while Aaron Hill highlighted the belief that 'he (God) only created' women 'for the *Use and Satisfaction* of the *nobler Males*'.¹⁰⁴ The most interesting suggestion that was made by all the narrators above in relation to the belief that women did not pray in the same manner as men, was that they did not possess souls or if they did, their souls were inferior to those of men which was likely a result of their lack of prayer and

¹⁰¹ Ottaviano Bon, *A description of the grand signour's seraglio or Turkish emperours court*, edited by John Greaves (London, 1653), pp. 190-191.

¹⁰² George Sandys, *A relation of a iourney begun An: Dom: 1610*, p. 55

¹⁰³ Paul Rycaut, *Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 153.

¹⁰⁴ Aaron Hill, *A full and just account of the present of the Ottoman empire*, p. 111.

devotion. The further consequence of this suggestion then was that women would not be promised Paradise or enjoy the pleasures of the afterlife as men would. This perception of women will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

The *Turkish Embassy Letters* of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (bap. 1689, d. 1762), the wife of the English ambassador to Turkey Edward Montagu from 1717-18 however highlighted the inaccuracies with which the previous travel accounts were rife. In her words:

Tis certain we have but very imperfect relations of the manners and Religion of these people, this part of the World being seldom visited but by merchants who mind little but their own Affairs, or Travellers who make too short a stay to be Able to report any thing exactly of their own knowledge. The Turks are too proud to converse familiarly with merchants etc., who can only pick up some confus'd informations which are generally false...Tis a particular pleasure to me here to read the voyages to the Levant, which are generally so far remov'd from Truth and so full of Absurditys I am very well diverted with 'em. They never fail giving you an Account of the Women, which 'tis certain they never saw, and talking very wisely of the Genius of the Men, into whose Company they are never admitted, and very often describe Mosques which they dare not peep into.¹⁰⁵

On her stopover in Belgrade, which was also under Turkish domination, she stayed in the house of a learned Turk, Achmed Bey, who was well-versed in Arabic and Persian and with whom Lady Montagu had many a lively discussion, one of which was on the seclusion of women. According to her:

He assures me, there is nothing at all in it; only, says he, we have the advantage that when our wives cheat us nobody knows it.¹⁰⁶

As she became more acquainted with Turkish women in person, her opinion of them became increasingly favourable, claiming women to be the most free of all the inhabitants in the Ottoman Empire. It was indeed the *hijab* that enveloped the women that resulted in Lady Montagu's notion of freedom which provides a further boost to Mernissi's point about the original non-

¹⁰⁵ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, 1:315-16, 368.

¹⁰⁶ Malcolm Jack (ed.), *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Turkish Embassy Letters*, pp. 53-4.

limiting and non-isolationist intent of the *hijab*. Lady Montagu's depictions of women and religion appear to be more knowledgeable as they were first-hand experiences. However, we must keep in mind that it was Lady Montagu's bias towards Turkish life that resulted in these observations. Later depictions of Turkish life by women who were not as impressed with it as was Lady Montagu, once again reflect overtones of previous notions.

As the seventeenth century drew to a close however, with the defeat of the Turks at Vienna came a gradual shift in Western perceptions of the Turks, who at the time were synonymous with Muslims as a whole, on account of the visible waning of their hitherto invincible status. The Turks also became known for their tolerance of other religions in their Empire. The English historian Thomas Fuller (1608-1661), in *Historie of the holy Warre*, portrayed the Turks as praiseworthy where their quality of tolerance was concerned:

to give the Mahometans their due, they are generally good-fellows in this point, and Christians amongst them may keep their consciences free, if their tongues be fettered not to oppose the doctrine of Mahomet.¹⁰⁷

Amidst the generally negative depictions of Islam and Muhammad, that of Henry Stubbe in the seventeenth century stands out as unique. His work titled *An Account of the Rise and Progress of Mahometanism, with the life of Mahomet and a vindication of him and his religion from the calumnies of the Christians* was noteworthy since it not only exalted Islam but also criticized Christianity for its ritualism.¹⁰⁸ In 1704 and 1706 respectively, Joseph Pitts and Joseph Morgan through their captivity narratives also portrayed favourable opinions of Islam and Muslims. While the former in *A True and Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mahometans* praised the

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Fuller, *The historie of the holy vvarre; by Thomas Fuller, B.D. prebendarie of Sarum, late of Sidney Colledge in Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1639), p. 8. Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West*, p. 81. Along with tolerance, honesty, sobriety and hospitality also counted amongst their virtues.

¹⁰⁸ Henry Stubbe, *An Account of the Rise and Progress of Mahometanism, with the life of Mahomet and a vindication of him and his religion from the calumnies of the Christians ... From a manuscript copied by Charles Hornby of Pipe Office, in 1705 "with some variations and additions."* Edited, with an introduction and appendix, by Hafiz Mahmud Khan Shairani (London, 1911). This manuscript, which elucidated Stubbe's more radical religious views was written anonymously and first published in 1911.

religious toleration of the North Africans and their prohibition of images, the latter stated through his narratives that:

I am persuaded that were...persons to converse unknowingly with Mahometans in a Christian dress, they would look upon them to be just such creatures as themselves.¹⁰⁹

This was therefore a sympathetic depiction of white captivity in Muslim lands as opposed to the generally-believed notion of extreme oppression, torture and sexual excesses that enslaved English men and women were exposed to, which emphasises the variety of experiences that white captives recorded.¹¹⁰

At this point it should also be noted, that if the English perception of Islam and Muslims was generally negative, so was that of the Muslims where Christians were concerned. For instance, Sir Daniel Harvey the new English ambassador to the Ottoman court in 1668, was kept waiting for a year by the then Sultan before being permitted an audience with him, thereby clearly conveying a message of superiority to the English.¹¹¹ Unfortunately, access to English translations with specific reference to Ottoman perceptions of Christianity and the English are scarce and therefore we cannot give the same degree of weight in terms of space and research to reciprocal views and opinions.

4) English Translations of the Qur'an:-

According to Alastair Hamilton, one of the motivating factors for the first European translation of the Qur'an in the mid-twelfth century was the failure of the crusades and the resultant failure of the Christians to convert Muslims. Therefore, translations undertaken with an apparent missionary intent of deriding Islam usually served the purpose of fulfilling the author's intellectual desires as Irwin has demonstrated. The first translation of the Qur'an into Latin was attempted by Robert Ketton in the Spanish city of Toledo in the mid-twelfth century. This was eventually prepared for publication in 1543 by

¹⁰⁹ Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the world, 1600-1850* (London, 2002), pp. 107, 122.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 59, 62, 109.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 104.

Theodor Bibliander and published in Basel by Johann Herbst. This was followed by several vernacular translations, one of the most famous being that into French by Andre du Ruyter in 1647, which was the version adopted by Alexander Ross to attempt the first English translation in 1649.¹¹²

The ominous threat of advancing Ottoman power was precisely the motivating factor for the first English translation of the Qur'an from French by Alexander Ross in 1649 in an attempt to comprehend the alien enemy through their alien religion. Ross, who was King Charles I's chaplain wrote:

Thou shalt find it of so rude, and incongruous a composure, so farced with contradictions, blasphemies, obscene speeches, and ridiculous fables, that some modest, and more rational *Mahometans* have thus excused it; that their Prophet wrote an hundred and twenty thousand sayings, whereof three thousand only are good, the residue (as the impossibility of the Moons falling into his sleeve, the Conversion and Salvation of the Devils, and the like) are false and ridiculous.¹¹³

Nabil Matar, in his discussion of the publication of Ross' 'Alcoran' highlights the analogy that Ross himself drew between the religion of the Turks and the then prevalent Commonwealth in England. His prejudice against both was clearly evident through his description of them as heresies. He outlined the insecurities of the Commonwealth in their attempt to prevent the publication of his translation stating that they feared the publication might result in the so-called heretical religion of the Turks taking a hold on the English people, particularly since they were not competent enough to provide the secure atmosphere (unlike that which would have been provided by a monarchy) that would be required to prevent such a state of affairs. The fusion of politics and religion through Ross' preface is noteworthy and indicates the extent to which the two were inextricably linked in practice as well as theory. Additionally, the

¹¹² Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, pp. 65, 71.

¹¹³ Alexander Ross, *The Alcoran of Mahomet* (London, 1649), A2. Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West*, p. 81. A.R. Kidwai, in his article scanning the various English translations of the Qur'an, also identifies two appendices in Ross' translation which clearly reflect his prejudice. The appendices in question are 'A Needful Caveat or Admonition, for them who desire to know what use may be made of or if there be danger in reading the "Alcoran"' (Ross, *Alcoran*, pp. 406-20) and 'The Life and Death of Mahomet: the Prophet of the Turks and author of the Alcoran' (Ross, *Alcoran*, pp. 395-405). Therefore, although he had gone through the process of translating the entire Qur'an, he had managed to portray the basic fact inaccurately by assigning the authorship of it to Muhammad.

use of the religion of the 'other' proved a double-edged sword (particularly in this instance), first, to overtly extol the virtues of Christianity and the Christian world¹¹⁴ and, second, to covertly emphasize the weaknesses in the home country, thereby voicing the fear that these political weaknesses provided the enemy with the advantage it needed to gain victory. This further throws light on the manner in which the Turks were perceived. Despite his description of Islam as a heresy (akin to the Commonwealth) he also attempted an objective portrayal of the religion by praising Muslims for their devotion and charity.¹¹⁵

The next attempt at translating the Qur'an occurred almost a century later,¹¹⁶ attributable to the lawyer, George Sale in 1734. Unlike Ross' translation which was from French to English, Sale's translation directly from Arabic into English purported to do the most impartial justice to a text which 'pretends to be the Word of God.' Sale puts forth his intent in his preface to the reader in the following words:

But whatsoever use an impartial version of the Koran may be of in other respects, it is absolutely necessary to undeceive those who, from the ignorant or unfair translations which have appeared, have entertained too favourable an opinion of the original, and also to enable us effectively to expose the imposture.

His missionary purpose is also clear when he lays down the rules that may be followed to effect the conversion of the Muslims to Christianity. In his words:

The Protestants alone are able to attack the Koran with success; and for them, I trust Providence has reserved the glory of its overthrow.

Although he criticised the previous translations of the Qur'an (including Ross' as full of mistakes in addition to the numerous errors that were already

¹¹⁴ In Ross' words, 'though it (the Alcoran) hath been a poyson, that hath infected a very great, but most unsound part of the Universe, it may prove an Antidote, to confirm in thee the health of Christianity.' See Alexander Ross, *The Alcoran of Mahomet*, A2.

¹¹⁵ Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain 1558-1685* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 77-82.

¹¹⁶ Although there were no official translations of the Qur'an in English between those of Ross and Sale, in 1652 Joshua Notstock published a refutation of the Qur'an, while it had been known that the first professor of Arabic at Cambridge University, Abraham Wheelocke had been working on a refutation of the Qur'an in 1640.

existent in Andrew du Ruyter's French translation), as being rife with inaccuracies, neither is his version free from debate, one of the instances being his statement about the authorship of the Qur'an: 'That Muhammad was really the author and chief contriver of the Koran, is beyond dispute', although he is also aware of the refutation of this assertion by Muslims who believe that the Qur'an is a revelation by God. Despite his evident disapproval of Muhammad, his desire to present an impartial examination of the Qur'an resulted in statements such as the following:

For how criminal soever Muhammad may have been in imposing a fake religion on mankind, the praises due to his real virtues ought not to be denied him.¹¹⁷

Additional English translations were published in the later years of the eighteenth century and thereafter, but these have not been discussed here as these are beyond the time frame of this particular study.

Conclusion:-

Taking both the Bible and Qur'an at face value, it is evident that spiritual equality of both sexes is emphasized in contrast to old Jewish tradition, aspects of which were repudiated by Jesus. However, the absence of female inheritance left women financially dependent on their husbands. Hence, in the case of an unhappy union, they could not seek a separation since they would have no means of supporting themselves economically. Islam in this regard, theoretically provided women with the right of inheritance and right to seek a divorce (although not recommended) without the fear of being destitute thereafter. What is clear though is that the Reformation and the Civil War provided sixteenth and seventeenth-century women with opportunities to make themselves increasingly visible in religious life, be it through religious writings attempting a redemption of Eve (the Original Sin being one of the main arguments of misogynistic rhetoric) or through actual participation in religious affairs albeit within certain limitations.

¹¹⁷ George Sale, *Koran, commonly called the Alcoran of Muhammad, tr. into English immediately from the original Arabic;: with explanatory notes, taken from the most approved commentators* (London, 1734), pp. iii, iv, vi, vii, 64. Like Sale, the Master of Jesus College at Cambridge, John Worthington in 1661 also felt the need to study the Qur'an before embarking on a conversion of the Muslims to Christianity.

It is amply clear in both the Bible and Qur'an that women were to enjoy, at least normatively, a status equal to their male counterparts and provisions were laid down to protect their rights and interests in the various spheres of life. Sure, there are certain basic differences of opinion in the theory of creation, marriage and divorce procedures and inheritance, but the overriding sentiment is that women were in no way spiritually inferior and therefore were to be treated justly and with respect. However, as noted earlier, there was incompatibility in theory and practice largely due to varied interpretations and differences in emphases.

Although female priesthood as per early Christian and Islamic doctrine was not prohibited (and there are examples of early Christian female deacons and preachers in the Bible, as well as learned female Imams such as Aisha), dispute soon arose as to the propriety of female priests. In the Christian tradition, despite certain advocates of female priesthood, the view of Tertullian soon became the final word on this subject:

It is not permitted for a woman to speak in the church, nor is it permitted for her to teach, nor to baptize, nor to offer (the eucharist), nor to claim for herself a share in any masculine function – least of all, in priestly office.¹¹⁸

Apart from the Maliki school of *Sunni* Islam, all other schools of *Sunni* Islam and most *Shia* sects agree to women being permitted to lead only female congregations in prayer. Women leading mixed congregations are a highly debated issue and advocates in favour are few and far between. The issue of female priesthood in both regions is therefore a good example of original teachings being altered through subsequent interpretations. Even though certain Protestant sects particularly during the Civil War permitted women a greater participation in religious affairs, it was by no means an equal involvement as that of men. The situation was similar in the Islamic world and it is only in recent times (and even more recently in the case of Islam with the first female Imam in China) that women have reacquired the rights that early

¹¹⁸ Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (London, 1980), p. 69. For further details see pp. 61, 65, 66 and 67-8.

teachings had permitted them, further emphasising the immense impact that interpretations of scriptures has on the fabric of society. Furthermore, another justification for women's exclusion from priesthood was the notion of their bodily impurity and uncleanness. In Islam for instance, women are forbidden from praying during menstruation on account of their impurity during that spell. The power of interpretations becomes all the more significant when we take into consideration the manner in which bodily uncleanness was then equated with not only physical weakness but also mental and spiritual inferiority in the minds of men.

Therefore, issues such as priesthood, one can assume, were bound to have implications where the perception of women as inferior beings was concerned and their consequent secondary status in the earthly world. For instance it was, in the opinion of Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), the clear division between the male-dominated public social process of production and private process of reproduction restricting women to the private arena in a capitalist society based on the class system, which had resulted in the oppression of women, and their low status.¹¹⁹ Status however is a highly subjective concept for if the restriction of women to the private sphere was viewed in England as a form of subordination, in the Ottoman realm the freedom of a matriarch over her entire private household may have amounted to a high status and respect. It becomes all the more imperative therefore to view women's positions and roles within the parameters of their respective ideas of religious values and culture and tradition rather than attempt a comparison of the position of English and Ottoman women on a single plane and using a single standard.

Christianity and Islam have shared an adversarial relationship almost from the very inception of Islam in the seventh century. As Linda Colley has pointed out, English views of Islam and Muslims altered as per the changing situations in their own country and changing power relations through the centuries.¹²⁰ It

¹¹⁹ Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (New York, 1979).

¹²⁰ Linda Colley, *Captives*, p. 113.

was therefore inevitable that changing perceptions of Islam¹²¹ as a whole were also reflected in the image of Muslim women in the western mind, mirrored in early modern writings.

This section therefore, has endeavoured to determine the position that women held in the scriptures and explore the various interpretations of the scriptures with regard to their position in their spiritual and earthly lives. As has been indicated, women's theoretical position as noted in the scriptures often did not coincide with later religious and secular interpretations of it. These authoritative and therefore often influential interpretations (at least at the time), had implications on women's earthly existence in terms of their position in society and legal rights which will be explored in the course of this study.

At first glance, although the spiritual equality of women did not appear to be in doubt in the Ottoman Empire, English depictions of Muslim women dismissed them as occupying an unequal position on the spiritual plane. Was this then indeed a consequence of Ottoman belief which had permeated into English accounts or could it possibly be a reflection of what appeared to be a belief in England in the inferiority of women, and to a certain extent their souls? Or then, was it a result of the above-mentioned *Hadith* to the detriment of women and their spirituality which were reflected in Ottoman belief, which in turn were mirrored in English narratives? These and related issues will be discussed in depth in Chapter 2, while the manner and extent to which religion and religious beliefs pertaining to women affected early modern life in England and English perceptions of Ottoman women, will be investigated in the following sections.

¹²¹ Bernard Lewis, *Islam in History; Ideas, Men and Events in the Middle East* (London, 1973) p. 17, N. Daniel, *Islam Europe and Empire* (Edinburgh, 1966), p. 33 and Albert Hourani, 'Islam and the Philosophers of History', in *Middle Eastern Studies*, iii (1967), p. 223-5 for details of nineteenth century opinions of Islam and Muslims.

FOREIGN PERCEPTIONS OF OTTOMAN WOMEN'S SOULS AND THEIR PLACE IN HEAVEN

Following close on the heels of the discussion of women's status in the scriptures is the issue of women's spiritual status in the afterlife. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, the theoretical status of women in the Bible and Qur'an were subject to numerous interpretations, some of which related directly to their posthumous spiritual place. This is an issue which deserves particular notice as these interpretations had a direct bearing on the understanding of women's place in the earthly world. Conversely, it was likely that the social, intellectual, political and legal status of women had an impact on interpretations of their position in the afterlife.

An examination of the early modern English travelogues and diplomatic narratives that form a significant source-base for this study revealed interesting commonalities in their perception of Ottoman women as either possessing inferior souls to those of men or, in some cases, possessing no souls at all, leading to the assumption that women could therefore not be promised Paradise. In addressing this issue, we look at seven different foreign (largely English) perceptions of Ottoman women's souls and their position in the afterlife. Six of the accounts dealt with here, those of Thomas Dallam (1599), Ottaviano Bon (1604-07), George Sandys (1637), Alberto Bobovi (approx. 1657), Sir Paul Rycaut (1668) and Aaron Hill (1709), upheld the belief in women's spiritual inferiority in varying degrees, while the seventh, Delarivier Manley's play *Almyna*, endeavoured to refute such beliefs. These authors and their works will be discussed in further detail once their observations have been noted, along with a discussion of the problems surrounding religious interpretations.

It should be noted that two of the authors mentioned were not English and therefore their observations need to be analysed within the particular context of their countries of origin and specific association with the Ottoman court.

While the Polish-born Alberto Bobovi spent nineteen years at the Ottoman court and was familiar with life within the seraglio, Bon was Venetian ambassador to Istanbul and only resident there between 1604 and 1607. The Venetians had had commercial ties with the Ottomans long before England formed commercial relations with the Turks. Belonging to a land that was expanding its power militarily across land and sea, Bon perhaps also possessed the added advantage of a longer association of Venice and Istanbul.

As previously noted, many of these beliefs come to the fore largely through narratives of English visitors to the Sublime Porte. As Daniel Vitkus points out, early modern travellers and narrators often provided descriptions of the Islamic notion of Paradise with clear sexual overtones. Even as early as the fourteenth century, *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* revealed notions that Muslim women in Paradise also occupied the status of wives similar to that on earth, sharing their wifely status with many other women. Therefore, women were portrayed as objects of pleasure, simply adding greatly to the numerous pleasures that men would experience in Paradise, but not as the primary recipients of those pleasures themselves. In fact, it was believed that it was these sexual excesses that Islam allegedly permitted as well as the continuation of these excesses in the afterlife that resulted in the conversion to Islam by some Christians.¹

Proceeding chronologically, the first author to be considered is Thomas Dallam in this context. Dallam, an organ-builder by profession, had been sent to Istanbul to assemble an organ for the Sultan presented to him by Elizabeth I. His observations are noteworthy particularly with regard to the issue of women's souls because of the matter-of-fact manner in which he discussed the spirituality of Muslim women. During his halt *en route* to Istanbul at 'Argeare' (modern Algiers) he made the following observation:

The Turkishe and Morishe women do goo all wayes in the streetes with there facis covered, and the common reporte goethe thare that

¹ Daniel Vitkus, *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England* (New York, 2000), pp. 14-15.

they beleve, or thinke that the women have no souls. And I do thinke that it weare well for them if they had none, for they never goo to church, or other prayers, as the men dothe. The men ar verrie relidgus in there kinde, and they have verrie faire churchis, which they do call mosques.²

In further exploring Dallam's observations, it is evident that he had no significant knowledge of Islam. Dallam can be excused for this since he was sent to Istanbul for a specific purpose which did not necessitate this knowledge; the duration of his stay was moreover short and task-orientated. Therefore he would have been inclined towards believing popular rumour. Additionally, most of his observations seem to have been based on comparisons with Christian women who were permitted to worship in church just as Christian men did. The fact that he did not see women attending the mosques like their male counterparts may have led him to the conclusion that women did not pray. He also probably had neither the time nor opportunity to learn that women prayed in their homes, as the Sultana did. This, combined with the generally prevalent patriarchal sentiment of the time, made it easy for him to go along with the general whispering that women were in fact soulless.

The Venetian *baillo*³ Ottaviano Bon (1551-1622) was sent to Istanbul for two and a half years sometime between 1604 and 1607. His account is considered to be one of the most reliable of all seventeenth-century narratives. Amid his depiction of Turkish religion is the following statement:

The women also shall come into Heaven, but shall be in a place far inferior to men, and be less glorified.⁴

This statement comes immediately after the declaration that although the good Christians and good Jews would also be granted afterlife, they would enjoy the fruits of Heaven in a place apart from and inferior to the Turks, who are 'beloved of God, and more dear unto him (God) than others.' Therefore, it

² Theodore J. Bent, *Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant: 1: The diary of Master Thomas Dallam, 1599-1600* (London, 1893), pp. 15-16.

³ The *Baillo* was the governor of Venice elected by the Great Council of Venice and held administrative and judicial authority.

⁴ Ottaviano bon, *A description of the grand signour's seraglio or Turkish emperours court* (London, 1653), p. 164.

would seem that Turkish women were equated with Christians and Jews and that although they too were Turks, it was only Turkish men who were 'more dear unto him'. Their inferior status in Bon's eyes can be explained by his belief that women were not religious, did not go to 'church' and prayed at home only if they 'happily have a will to pray'.⁵ He discussed women's religion at the end of his narrative since he considered it to be the least important. The interesting observation is that his last paragraph deals with the lusty and lascivious' and deceitful nature of women, which seems to sum up his overall impression of Turkish women.⁶

George Sandys (1578-1644), the youngest son of Edwin Sandys, the Archbishop of York, departed on his educational journey to the Ottoman Empire in 1610. He spent two years travelling and his detailed account was published in London in 1615. Although he is best known as a poet whose work influenced Francis Bacon, Ben Jonson, John Milton as well as Keats, he was also considered to be among the first English Egyptologists because of his informative narrative of his journey.⁷ In the section on the Islamic faith in his narrative of his travels to Turkey, he states the following with particular reference to mosques of the dervishes:

Now the women are not permitted into their temples (yet have they secret places to looke in thorow grates) partly for troubling their devotions, but especially for that they are not excised, as are the women of Persia and Aethiopia.⁸

As for their existence in the afterlife, he is clear that women were not permitted into Heaven; instead they were allocated to another abode beyond its precincts:

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 190.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 55. For a brief account of Bon's life and achievements see Godfrey Goodwin (ed.), *The Sultan's Seraglio*, pp. 12-14.

⁷ James Ellison, 'Sandys, George (1578-1644)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24651>. Sandys' translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* proved to be a work which influenced many, some of whom have been mentioned above. He also set a precedent as the first Englishman to translate a travel journal into English and thereafter his example was followed by many, such as Sir Thomas Herbert, John Evelyn and James Howell.

⁸ George Sandys, *A relation of a iourney*, p. 55. This quotation has also been used on p. 58 to further the discussion on Turkish religion.

but as for the women, poore souls! be they never so good, they have the gates shut against them: yet are consigned to a mansion without where they shall live happily; as another repleat with misery for the other.⁹

Sandys, like Dallam, also makes a note of the fact that women did not go to the mosques to pray. However, while Dallam simply stated that women did not pray,¹⁰ Sandys elaborated by saying that women were not permitted to pray in mosques and one of their objectives of surreptitiously going there was to distract religious-minded men during their prayers. Thus, women are portrayed as mere mischievous and immoral beings, who carry out their evil designs on virtuous men. Sandys then looks at their fate in the afterlife and assigns them to neither Heaven nor Hell. The more virtuous members of the female sex, according to him, lived outside the limits of Heaven in an exclusive mansion thereafter in a state of happiness, while the more immoral and sinful of them were housed in another mansion of total misery.¹¹ Although women also suffered the punishments or enjoyed the rewards of the afterlife, they were not considered as equal members of humanity and were not assigned the boundless enjoyments and beautiful pleasures of Heaven like their pious male counterparts. Sandys had successfully painted a picture of a Heaven and Hell separate from scriptural images, thereby connoting an exclusion of women from the conventional notions of spirituality. Even if they lived chaste lives, they could never reach the same level of virtuousness as men could so as to be rewarded with Heaven. Their exclusion in either case was a given.

The focus now shifts to the account by Alberto Bobovi¹² of the physical description and functions of the personnel associated with the Topkapı Sarayı. Polish by birth and enslaved by Tartars, he eventually landed up in the Sultan's service. His musical talent was soon recognised and he occupied the

⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 55, 58

¹⁰ Theodore Bent, *Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant*, pp. 15-16.

¹¹ George Sandys, *A relation of a iourney*, pp. 55, 58.

¹² Bobovi's original manuscript, written in Italian shortly after his dismissal and titled *Serai enderun sic, cioe, Penetrate dell' Serajito detto nuoveodei G. sri e Re Ottomani*, is unfortunately missing, but five different translations and versions of it still exist. It is the French version which has been translated into English.

office of music instructor for nineteen years at Topkapı during the reigns of three Sultans: Murad IV (1623-40), Ibrahim I (1640-48) and Mehmed IV (1648-87). His 'inordinate fondness for wine' proved to be his undoing, resulting in his removal in 1657. Although his observations are debatable, his residence in the seraglio for nineteen years might lend more credibility to his account than that of the ambassadors who resided in Istanbul for shorter spells outside the walls of the seraglio. Moreover, as Gottfried Hagen in Robert Dankoff's translation of Evliya Çelebi's travels has shown, Bobovi also appeared to be in contact with some of the European visitors to Istanbul and it is therefore possible that his observations of life within the seraglio have formed the basis of one or more of the English narratives discussed here.¹³

One of the rooms of the palace he described was the Large Mosque where the Sultan and his mother went to pray along with the rest of the royal family. In the context of prayers, Bobovi went on to express his doubts about women entering paradise:

I don't know if the sultanas will have a special place in Paradise, but it is certain that they hope to enter it. They believe that it is necessary to pray in this world, whereas most women don't go to the mosque since their husbands believe it to be a futile effort.¹⁴

In another section, he stated that Muslim men were not permitted to eat out of gold or silver plates, whereas Muslim women were; and he gives an intriguing explanation for it:

The women are not promised the joy of Paradise unless they obey their husbands and remain faithful to them in this life. If so, their husbands remember them in Paradise and sometimes have them come to their beautiful Heaven to play in their company. The women, after death, remain in a particular place where there is neither good or bad. They don't have the satisfaction of mixing with angels and being served by them as the good Muslim men will. The good Muslims always have a good number of small angels near them with whom they will enjoy eternal pleasures and partake in all the voluptuousness that the body is capable of enjoying. At the same time the soul is ravished by the ecstasy of seeing God face to

¹³ Robert Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality: the World of Evliya Çelebi* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 251-2.

¹⁴ C.G. Fisher & A. Fisher, 'Topkapı Sarayı in the mid-Seventeenth Century: Bobovi's Description' in *Archivum Ottomanicum* (1985, II), pp. 64.

face. As the women have no hope for the great rewards in the next world, while they are in this world, as long as they abstain from doing wrong according to the human law, they are exempt from the rigors of the Muslim law. Also, they are not ordered to pray to God nor to attend the mosque. This is the reason why the wives eat from golden plates and silver without any scruple.¹⁵

Although Bobovi spent nineteen years in the seraglio, his knowledge of Islam particularly with regard to women's spiritual status appears to be slight. Either he had had little opportunity to get acquainted with Islamic principles despite his long residence in the palace or what he narrated was what had been communicated to him as local belief. He knew that the women of the Imperial Harem prayed at home, but seemed to be unclear about the position that women held where entering Paradise was concerned. On the one hand, he said that in order to strive to enter Paradise, women believed that they should pray, but, on the other hand, he stated that after death, women would remain in limbo regardless of whether they prayed or not. It all boiled down to obedience to their husbands which sealed their fate rather than righteous deeds. Women entering Paradise was dependent upon their husbands summoning them to Heaven rather than on God permitting them the pleasures of the afterlife.¹⁶ The Qur'an states that on the Day of Judgement, each soul will stand alone and ties of family and friendship will no longer exist. Therefore, since worldly relationships will no more be recognised, Bobovi's claim of women being dependent on their husbands' goodwill for entry into Paradise appeared to be unfounded in religious doctrine, unless Bobovi's narration in this context had at the time been founded in an Ottoman interpretation of Qur'anic doctrine.

Similar implications of women having no hope of passing through the gates of Heaven are evident in Sir Paul Rycaut's travel account, based mainly on his personal experiences, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*. He was sent to Istanbul in 1661 as the secretary of the then English Ambassador, the

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 72.

¹⁶ Comparisons can be made in this respect with the thirteenth-century plight of women as alluded to earlier through English confessors' manuals. Their first duty lay undoubtedly towards their husbands even at the cost of their spiritual duties and consequent mitigation or prevention of sin. See chapter 1, p. 28.

second Earl of Winchelsea and stayed in Turkey for six years; his work was published in 1668.

In his chapter on marriage and divorce he mentions the licentious nature of Turkish women:

And whereas these Women are educated with much retiredness from the conversation of men; and consequently with greater inclinations towards them, and with no principles of virtue of moral honesty or Religion, as to the future state relating to the rewards or punishments of their good or bad actions; they are accounted the most lascivious and immodest of all Women, and excel in the most refined and ingenious subtilties to steal their pleasures.¹⁷

Rycaut appears to be quite convinced that the segregated lifestyle of Turkish women from the initial stages of their lives, made them crave male contact, which they had no qualms in procuring even at the expense of their reputations. Without directly mentioning women from other religions or regions, he includes womankind in general by describing Turkish women as the most lascivious of all women. Since lewdness and lustfulness are sins, he implies that women would be damned to Hell purely by virtue of the possession of these sinful qualities.¹⁸

Apart from being famed for his descriptive depiction of the Ottoman Empire, Aaron Hill (1685-1750) was also a poet and dramatist. His work on the Ottoman Empire is a full and detailed account of all aspects of Ottoman life, customs and manners, and although biased and at times inaccurate it is largely credible. His description of Turkish women also has an interesting reference to their immorality and consequent state of their souls:

... 'tis no wonder they have no more regard to their *Vertue* all their *Honour*, while the Duties of *Religion* are never taught 'em; but *on the contrary*, their Mind's possess'd, that as *God* has given them a Soul *inferiour to that of Man*, he exacts less Service from the *Female Sex*, whom he only created for the *Use and Satisfaction of the nobler Males*.¹⁹

¹⁷ Paul Rycaut, *Present state of the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 152-53.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 152-3

¹⁹ Aaron Hill, *A full and just account of the present of the Ottoman empire*, p. 111. For a brief biography of Aaron Hill see Christine Gerrard, 'Hill, Aaron (1685-1750)', *Oxford Dictionary of*

Hill's depiction of Turkish women was also predominantly negative. Describing them as 'lascivious', he portrays them as mere objects of satisfaction created by God expressly to quench the desire of men. He explains their lasciviousness in their own supposed knowledge of their comparatively 'inferior' souls, which unlike those of men could not be saved through pious deeds. Because of their deficient religious education, this belief in the inferiority of their souls was internalised by Turkish women in general and therefore lust was not perceived as a sin by them.²⁰

As for the religious knowledge of Bon, Rycaut, Sandys and Hill, one might expect more accuracy because of increasing Levantine trading activities and the consequent growth in the number of not only merchants, but also ambassadors and diplomats visiting the Ottoman lands. A number of parallels can be drawn between the four accounts in the treatment of their sections on the 'Turkish religion'. This is particularly the case between Sandys and Hill²¹ and one wonders whether Hill had based the foundation of his comprehension of Islam on Sandys' and/or similar descriptions. Although they lament the degenerate nature of women's earthly lives and their souls, and though they are quite certain about their exclusion from Heaven, they do not deny them souls. All commentators discuss women's souls in the context of their religious practises and make direct associations between the moral impropriety of their behaviour, their perceived lascivious nature and the inferiority of their souls.

Turning to the plays of the time, Yeazell directs our attention to the playwright Delarivier Manley (1670-1724). Born in 1670 to a royalist officer and a mother who was a native of the Spanish Netherlands, Delarivier Manley rose to fame as a playwright in 1696 with her production of a tragedy titled *The Royal Mischief*. Manley's *Almyna* was written and performed a decade later. Like her contemporary playwright Mary Pix, Manley catered to popular demand by

National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13264>, accessed 1 Sept 2006.

²⁰ Hill, *A full and just account of the present of the Ottoman empire*, p. 111.

²¹ Sandys, *A relation of a iourney*, pp. 54-60 and Aaron Hill, *A full and just account of the present of the Ottoman empire*, pp. 46-58

giving the play an Oriental theme.²² Although the representation of the Turks in English drama had been a popular strain, this particular play has been chosen as it of specific relevance to the issue of women's souls.

Almyna, the English translation of Antoine Gannad's *Mille et une Nuits* (which emphasized the evilness of womankind), based on Scheherezade, the heroine of *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* (1706-21), explained women's inferiority through the 'Sultan of the East', Almanzor and his brother who believed that women had no souls. According to Almanzor's brother, women were 'nothing...',

Form'd as our Prophet says, without a Soul...
Their Shining out-side but a gawdy bait,
To make us take the toyl from Nature to ourselves,
And do her drudgery, of propagation.
Had she not produced those glittering Ills,
We had like Trees and Plants, from Sun, and Earth:
Our Common Parents rose; masculine, and wise.²³

As Yeazell points out, this masculine hatred of women is based on their disdain for the female body and its role in propagation and the fear of mortality. By denying women souls, the sultan's brother is reaffirming his own immortality. What should be noted is the fact that the doctrine of women's soullessness is not shared by all. For instance, the derviş Alhador in the play asserts that it was not a Qur'anic doctrine but had sprouted from 'Imperial will'. This is followed by Almyna herself justifying it as a form of revenge for the trauma that the unfaithfulness of Almanzor's own wife had inflicted on him. As highlighted by Yeazell, regardless of the Sultan's conception of a learned woman as 'A contradiction to her very Nature',²⁴ the significance lies in the fact that Almyna courageously debates Qur'anic principles before the Sultan.²⁵

²² For details of Manley's life and works see Ros Ballaster, 'Manley, Delarivier (c.1670–1724)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17939>, accessed 2 Nov 2006.

²³ Delarivier Manley, *Almyna or the Arabian Vow* (London, 1707), p. 9. Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Harems of the Mind: Passages of Western Art and Literature* (London, 2000), pp. 188-9.

²⁴ Manley, *Almyna*, p. 10.

²⁵ Yeazell, *Harems of the Mind*, p. 189

The vow taken by the Sultan was in fact in reaction to his wife's adultery, whereby he pledged to sleep with a different woman each night and have her murdered the next morning. Almyna however was determined to redeem her sex and bring an end to this cruelty by spending one night with the Sultan herself in the hope of doing so. At the end of the play, Almyna is spared death (on account of her heroism) by the Sultan, but more significantly, only after he declares that 'Women have...Souls, divine as we.'²⁶ Therefore, although the depiction of women begins with the stereotypical soullessness of women, it ends by clearing up this misconception.

Conclusion:-

Intriguing as these opinions and depictions are, and although it is tempting as well as convenient to discount them, we cannot overlook them without thinking about their sources. A possibility is that their sources were people who were native to the Ottoman Empire, which would in turn result in several further speculations, such as the ethnicity of the native inhabitant, the language in which the information was conveyed, whether it was conveyed directly or through an intermediary, and so on. Bobovi would be a good example. A Polish convert to Islam, he not only lived as a Muslim during his tenure as a page within the seraglio but also after he was dismissed. Although he may not have depicted Islamic views of women's place in the afterlife, his observations may have been in line with, if not first-hand experience, then at least with what may have been believed within the seraglio. This nevertheless creates problems when we consider the number of foreign converts to Islam that made up a large section of the inhabitants of the seraglio. To what extent then could their authority on Islamic matters be trusted, or if their knowledge was trustworthy, then what may have been the reason for the belief in the inferior nature of women's souls at least by some residents?

Attempting to reconcile foreign observations of Turkish women's place in the afterlife with beliefs by what may have then been some Ottomans on the subject, leads us to the problems that interpretation of the religious texts

²⁶ Manley, *Almyna*, p. 64. Yeazell, *Harems of the Mind*, pp. 188-9, 190.

poses, which as we have seen has been highlighted by Fatima Mernissi in her discussion of women in the Islamic context. Two of the proclamations which have been discussed in the first chapter can be revisited in this context as well:

'The Prophet said that the dog, the ass, and woman interrupt prayer if they pass in front of the believer, interposing themselves between him and the qibla.' Muhammad is also said to have noticed that Hell was dominated by the female sex.²⁷ These proclamations, if quoted out of context of the circumstances in which Muhammad had stated them in response to specific situations, would leave an interpreter with ample room within which to manipulate and formulate meanings entirely detrimental to women's earthly and spiritual status. While the first *Hadith* implied that it was only men who were considered as believers, the second more directly placed women in Hell as the predominant sinners. Therefore, it is possible that proclamations such as these resulted in notions of the absence or unquestioned inferiority of women's souls even within the Ottoman Empire. Therefore although the Qur'an is clear as to the spiritual equality of the sexes, men with an ulterior motive of maintaining their authority may have very well used revered texts to bolster their argument.

Another perspective is added through Yeazell's concept of the imagined harem. According to her, in the seventeenth-century the harem was often perceived as a prison or cage in the western imagination. The idea of women as caged animals or birds and therefore inferior beings appeared to be a common association.²⁸ Furthermore, one also must keep in mind that the women of the harem were mainly slaves, whose human attributes were largely overshadowed by their association with a form of property or possession, thereby leading to the possibility of their further association with soullessness. Therefore, if we extend this idea to explain Bon's and Sandys' notion of a separate, inferior or different kind of afterlife to that of men, then it is possible that the engrained notion of the secluded harem on earth was also applicable to the position of women in the afterlife in their imagination. What

²⁷ Fatima Mernissi, *Women and Islam*, pp. 70, 75, 76, 78-80.

²⁸ Yeazell, *Harems of the Mind*, p. 62.

emerged consequently was a separate and confined specifically female space even in the imagined spaces of the afterlife. In other words, it can be understood as the prohibition of women from the public or otherwise imagined to be male space of Heaven. The separate female space assigned to women in the afterlife may then be equated with the private sphere, perceived as isolated, segregated and inferior as was the case in many ways in the earthly world.

Although the Quaker leader George Fox in 1647 claimed to have encountered a community in the Midlands which undoubtedly believed that souls were not the property of women,²⁹ we do not have similar obvious direct references to the absence of women's souls with associations of being denied Paradise in the English context. Keith Thomas' study on religion and magic reveals that many sixteenth and seventeenth-century atheists voiced their doubts as to the immortality of the soul and the afterlife, but their opinions were not restricted to women.³⁰ They were therefore expressing views expected from atheists in the strict sense of the term, albeit in an age when a deviation from orthodox religious doctrine was perceived as blasphemy. Female and male English authors of the early modern period use references to 'souls' but the term 'soul' at times took on ambiguous overtones and therefore can be interpreted in different ways. Interesting as it would be to investigate these references individually and in depth, such an investigation is limited by the scope of a doctoral thesis and will have to be undertaken as a separate investigation on a grander scale. Then perhaps we might be able to draw some parallels between such references in England and in English narratives of Turkish women.

²⁹ George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox* (London, 1675), pp. 8-9.

³⁰ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of magic*, pp. 198-206.

MARRIAGE, WIDOWHOOD AND DIVORCE/SEPARATION

This study, having begun with religion and the manner in which women were perceived within its precepts, will now continue with the examination of the earthly lives of Englishwomen and those of Ottoman women largely perceived through the eyes of English travellers. In this section the customs and traditions that revolved around the main stage of a woman's life, namely marriage, which inevitably were rooted in religion, will be examined along with the possibilities of a divorce or separation in cases of an intolerable union. Women's lives in society will be examined while keeping in mind the manner and extent to which interpretations of their position, as laid down in the scriptures, impacted their earthly existence.

As noted earlier, the period in which marriage and separation will be discussed ranges from about 1520-1720; 1520 being the start of Süleyman's reign over the Ottoman lands and the commencement of the rise in significance of the Imperial Harem, while 1720 marks the period immediately after the end of Lady Montagu's stay in Istanbul as the wife of the English ambassador to Turkey, Edward Montagu. The Ottoman Empire encompassed not only vast regions of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, but also parts of North Africa, giving rise to a mixture of religions, cultures and practices, but this study will largely focus on the 'Sublime Porte' and the areas immediately surrounding it. Therefore reference to Ottoman practices and traditions will largely be confined to this region. As mentioned in the introduction, although the discussion will include women from the lower classes, the emphasis here, and throughout the study, will be on upper class women on account of the nature of source material, which focuses heavily on the aristocracy, particularly in the Ottoman instance. A brief discussion of the lower social classes however, is essential in this section for a fuller understanding of women's lives in the marital context. Focusing on women's status, an attempt will be made to understand the role of married women and their consequent status in society.

1) MARRIAGE:-

1.a) Queens regnant and Queen consorts:-

Royal marriages in England were largely governed by the importance of forging beneficial political alliances either from within Britain itself or with neighbouring European regimes and with the intention of producing an heir to the throne. The period under study in the English context witnessed four queens regnant namely Mary I (1553-58), Elizabeth I (1558-1603), Mary II (1689-94) and Anne (1702-14), all of whom will be discussed below with specific reference to the issue of their marriages.

The marriage of Mary I to Philip (later Philip II of Spain) was not only a political alliance but also one triggered by the urgency of producing an heir to the throne in order to prevent Mary's half-sister, the Protestant Elizabeth, from succeeding to the throne. This marriage made Philip King of England only by virtue of his marriage to Mary. His powers within government were however limited and it was clearly Mary who held the reins. The problem of succession was also one of the main causes for the long debate on a suitable marriage partner for Elizabeth I, which ceased once it was clear that the Queen had passed child-bearing age.

Mary II had been married to William of Orange before their accession to the throne of England and therefore the same motives for marriage did not apply in her case as with Mary I for instance. Because Mary II had agreed to become queen regnant only if her husband William reigned with her, Mendelson and Crawford believe that her powers may have suffered slightly in comparison to Elizabeth.¹ Like her sister, Anne too was married to Prince George of Denmark long before her accession to the throne, in 1683. Although a political alliance, theirs was a happy union. When Prince George

¹ Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998), p. 367.

died in October 1708, it was said that 'His death, has flung the Queen into an unspeakable grief. She never left him till he was dead, but continued kissing him the very moment his breath went out of his body, and 'twas with a great deal of difficult my Lady Marlborough prevailed upon her to leave him.'² The reigns of the four queens of England will be noted in detail in the following chapter, while the marriages of the Princesses Elizabeth (daughter of James I), Mary Henrietta Stuart, Mary (later Queen Mary II) will be discussed in the section below.

Legal marriage among the Ottoman sultans became a distant memory by the sixteenth century, with the exception of Hurrem, consort of Süleyman the Magnificent (1520-66) and Nurbanu, consort of Selim III (1566-74). Dynastic marriages with princesses of neighbouring rulers had been practised in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, more as a means of making political alliances. However, many of the adjoining states had been incorporated within Ottoman dominion by the fifteenth century and therefore, contracting a marriage with an inferior power was considered unworthy of the great Ottoman Sultan. Reliance on concubinage as a means of furthering the dynasty became the accepted custom.³ Aaron Hill documents the reasons for the disappearance of marriages amongst the sultans:

The *Turkish Sultans* must not Marry, or it is become a Politic Omission to forbear so doing; *First*, in that 'twou'd cause *Alliances*, and distant *Kindred* to their *Royal Family*, a thing they always *Fear'd* and *Hated*; and *Secondly* because the *Greatest* and most *Unexpected* turns of *Fate*, shall never wound the *Princes Honour*, in obliging him in seeing a *Wife* become the *Victim* of Licentious Insolence, and he himself an helpless *Witness* of a shameful Usage.⁴

Paul Rycaut wrote on the same subject:

Amongst all the priviledges that the enjoys above his subjects, this one he hath less than they, that he cannot Marry; but yet hath as

² Edward Gregg, 'Anne (1665–1714)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/560>, accessed 10 Aug 2007.

³ Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem, Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 28-31.

⁴ Aaron Hill, *A full and just account of the present of the Ottoman empire*, p. 104.

many Women as serves his use, though never so libidinous, or are requisite for the Ostentation and greater Magnificence of his Court, according to the custom of the Eastern Princes, who placed a great part of their Pomp in the multitude of their Women. This disuse of Marriage in the *Sultan*, hath been a Maxime of State, and reckoned amongst the, *Inter Arcana Imperii*, from the time of *Bajazet*, untill this very Age.⁵

This system of concubinage gave rise to the institution of the Imperial Harem with its own hierarchy, rules and regulations which requires a brief discussion in order to wholly understand the workings of the 'politics of reproduction' as Peirce terms it.

1.b) The Institution of the Royal Harem:-

The word, 'harem' literally means 'forbidden' or 'taboo' and therefore 'sacred'. It came to refer to the residential quarters of the women of a household.⁶ The Imperial Harem acquired increasing importance in the sixteenth century from the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent (1520-66) under his favourite concubine and later wife, Roxelana or Hurrem Sultan. The intricacies of language also played a part in altering the original meaning of the harem. As Yeazell suggests, authors misconstrued the Turkish word for palace (*saray*) for the Italian word *serrare* meaning to lock or enclose. The resultant 'seraglio' therefore implied not only the sultan's residence, but also the area in which women were confined and in some cases, it was used to refer to harem women as a whole. More importantly, the term became synonymous with a prison and loss of liberty. It also became equated with a brothel (as Thomas Dallam referred to it) and in some cases paradoxically with a nunnery or convent. Not only were the physical features of a harem and nunnery likened but also the confinement of the inhabitants of both within the four walls containing all that they would require.⁷

⁵ Paul Rycaut, *Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 155.

⁶ H.A.R. Gibb and Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West, A Study of Western Civilisation on Moslem Culture in the Near East* (Oxford, 1950), p. 72.

⁷ Yeazell, *Harems of the Mind*, pp. 2, 59-60.

The Imperial Harem consisted of all the female members of the Sultan's family, such as his mother, the *valide sultan*, consorts and concubines, also known as *haseki*, young princes and princesses, and their extensive entourage, namely the harem stewardess and the Sultan's wet nurse, black and white eunuchs and other administrative staff. Only the Sultan, other women and eunuchs were permitted entry into this section of the seraglio. The female inhabitants were not allowed to leave the precincts of the harem, except when they accompanied the Sultan to another residence. In some cases they even had to obtain permission from the Sultan to stroll in the palace gardens.⁸ The household grew considerably especially between the 1550's and 1650's.⁹ The chief eunuch was the primary administrative figure in the harem and even had the authority to 'chastise' or 'correct' the three hundred or so women of the harem. Not only was he the gatekeeper through whom visitors and messages moved in and out of the harem, but he was also the administrator of the vast possessions of property belonging to the harem women.¹⁰

The structure of the harem institution was seen as a pyramid with the *valide sultan* at its apex. Immediately below her was the favourite *haseki* followed by the princesses and the other *hasekis*. At the bottom of the pyramid were the numerous slave girls who were rigorously trained in the harem school to enable them to ascend the lofty ladder to the top. A girl was picked out by the Sultan from many by throwing 'a handkerchief into that virgin's hand, by which token she knoweth that she is to lie with him that night. So she being, questionless, exceeding joyful to become the object of so great a fortune'.¹¹

The harem functioned on the strict principle of discipline and any form of disobedience was punished. The hierarchy within the harem was also governed by a routine of appropriate training. The ultimate goal was realized

⁸ Gibb, and Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, , p. 75.

⁹ Leslie Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 119-25.

¹⁰ Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women* (London, 1997), pp. 134-5 and Barnette Miller, *Beyond the Sublime Porte: the Grand Seraglio of Stambul* (Yale, 1931), pp. 91-2.

¹¹ Ottaviano Bon, *The Sultan's Seraglio an intimate portrait of life at the Ottoman court (from the seventeenth-century edition of John Withers)*, Godfrey Goodwin (ed.) (London, 1996), p. 48 and Leslie Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 132.

once they had borne sons and commanded a high degree of respect, next only to the *valide sultan* and *baş haseki* (or head *haseki*), as *haseki sultans* or mothers of younger sons. The *baş haseki* was the mother of the oldest son and hence heir. Her position as the chief royal lady of the harem was also accompanied by total seclusion. If her son succeeded the throne, she attained the title of *valide sultan* and enjoyed great powers. However, the death of the reigning Sultan or the son of the *baş haseki*, resulted in a loss of authority of their mothers. Therefore, at the end of the day it was clear that their authority depended entirely on their sons or the sultan. In such a competitive atmosphere, it was natural that intrigues and factions within the harem were rife resulting in some of the most terrible atrocities and political upheavals in the period under study.¹²

Thomas Dallam has left a description of a glimpse of some of the harem women during his stay in Istanbul in 1599. Through a 'grate in the wale' he perceived a group of girls playing ball in the garden. His observation resulted in a detailed description of their apparel and appearance as well as their recreation. Their game also involved knocking off the turbans of the eunuchs and pushing them into the outdoor pool. His description of the game resembles that of innocent little girls rather than women who were being trained or had been trained to be the objects of pleasure and lust for the sultan.¹³ He elaborated on their attire and appeared to be quite mesmerized by their beauty. When he was forced to come away, which he 'was verrie lothe to dow' for that 'sight did please me wondrous well', he told his interpreter about what he had seen, who strongly warned him against repeating it lest a Turk should hear of it, in which case the person responsible would face certain death. Dallam however was convinced that if the ladies had seen him there they would surely have approached him with inquiries as to his origin. This suggests that Dallam had not quite grasped the extent to which the seclusion of women was observed in its entirety and the seriousness of the consequences of male strangers even catching a glimpse of the harem

¹² This hierarchy is well explained in Godfrey Goodwin, *The Private World of Ottoman Women*, pp. 129-132.

¹³ Leslie Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 129.

ladies. He did not realise that if they had seen him, they would probably not have exchanged words with him for fear of the repercussions.¹⁴ As Bon indicates, women were severely beaten for misconduct or then banished to the Old Seraglio which implied an end to their career in the Imperial Harem.¹⁵

The existence of concubines in the Court as sexual objects is reflected by Dallam's account of the Sultan's attempt at bribing him to prolong his visit to Istanbul, with two royal concubines.¹⁶ The concubines had no say in such matters. They were captives from neighbouring regions and therefore it was believed that the Sultan could exercise his right over them as he wished; they, being his slaves, had no option but to comply.

The institution of the harem underwent change towards the end of the seventeenth century, particularly where royal concubines were concerned. Just as the title of *khatun* for all royal concubines had been replaced by *haseki* in the sixteenth century, signifying the emergence of concept of the 'favourite' concubine, the title of *baş kadın* and *ikinci kadın* replaced that of *haseki* by the end of the seventeenth century. According to Peirce, although the principle of favouritism in the concept of *baş kadın*, was still prevalent, it placed the rest of the royal concubines on a more or less equal footing as opposed to the practice of the large part of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Therefore, the status of the favourite concubine was no longer as important in the strict hierarchical sense, although she still did have the power to exercise her influence with the Sultan. Moreover, the royal concubines were no longer permitted to attach the title of *sultan*, which was then only reserved for the *valide sultan* in the harem, thereby maintaining the supremacy of the *valide* and increasing the gap between her authority and that of the other concubines.¹⁷

¹⁴ Bent (ed.), *Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant*, pp. 74-75.

¹⁵ Ottaviano Bon, *The Sultan's Seraglio*, p. 57.

¹⁶ Bent (ed.), *Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant*, p. 73. Dallam later told the English Ambassador what he had been offered by the Sultan and was advised not to displease the Sultan by declining his offer, but agree to stay on of his own accord.

¹⁷ Leslie Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 107-8.

The institution of the harem and the strict hierarchical structures with its intermeshing networks gives us an idea of not only how elaborate but also how significant this institution was in dynastic terms. Whereas in England royal marriages took place with neighbouring kingdoms in order to forge political links, in the Ottoman Empire, it was precisely the desire to avoid such political alliances that had given rise to the full-fledged institution of the Imperial Harem. Although many English narratives attempted detailed descriptions of the alien concept of the Imperial Harem, from Dallam's account of his encounter with some of the harem women, it is clear that Englishmen found it difficult to understand how this alien institution actually functioned.

1.c) Princesses:-

The marriages of princesses in the English realm were usually arranged by their parents at a very early age and were generally political alliances with the princes of European kingdoms. These political alliances were all the more significant if the princesses were in the direct line of succession in the absence of a male heir to the throne. Therefore it was imperative that in this eventuality, the kingdom with which the fortunes of the throne of England would be linked was a suitable one.

Princess Elizabeth (1596-1662 - daughter of King James I and Queen Anne of Denmark) who was married to Frederick, Count Palatine and Elector was not inclined towards adopting the duties that were expected of her. Instead her generous and gullible nature soon placed her in debt, a situation which was eventually rectified by her mother-in-law by placing restrictions on her spending. It was clear from the example of Princess Mary (1631-1660 - daughter of King Charles I and Henrietta Maria) that princesses, who were not given a say in their choice of marriage partner, were generally resigned to the choice made for them. Prior to her marriage to Prince William of Orange (at the age of nine), when she was asked if she was agreeable to accepting the prince as her husband she is reported to have replied, 'Yes, since the queen my mother desires it; and I wish the prince would come to England that we

might meet.¹⁸ The marriage of Princess Mary (later Queen Mary II) was a crucial matter as she was also second in line to the throne after her father, James II. Unwillingness and distress at the idea of matrimony, as in the case of the fifteen year-old Princess Mary (later Queen Mary II - 1662-94, daughter of King James II and Anne Hyde) to her prospective groom, William of Orange (son of William II of Nassau and Princess Mary Henrietta Stuart), who was chosen for her, eventually had to give way to acquiescence before the pressure from her uncle Charles II. According to Princess Mary's chaplain Dr. Edward Lake, 'her highness wept all that afternoon and the following day' when the news of her marriage arrangements was broken to her. Her father James II had hoped to find a husband for her with Catholic affiliations, but both he and Mary realised that the King had to be obeyed.¹⁹ Her husband's cold demeanour and indifference must have been a disappointment for her since she possessed a passionate nature, expressed through her play-acted romantic correspondence with her friend Frances Apsley during her teenage years. She pined for the love of her husband, but William's indifference only hurt her further as is tellingly revealed through her chaplain, John Covil's correspondence with the English ambassador to The Hague in 1685. In his words, 'the Princess's heart is ready to break; and yet she, every day, counterfeits the greatest joy ... The Prince hath infallibly made her his absolute slave'.²⁰

In the Ottoman realm, marriages of princesses to high-ranking officials within the Empire were preferred rather than alliances with neighbouring kingdoms. After all, the Sultan stayed away from matrimony largely in order to avoid extensive alliances with neighbouring kingdoms and therefore it was only prudent that this policy of exclusion applied to his sisters and daughters as well. Grand Viziers and senior officials were invariably chosen as husbands for princesses. Most royal women appeared to have had no freedom in the selection of their husbands, as is evident from Lady Montagu's description of

¹⁸ Alison Plowden, *The Stuart Princesses* (Stroud, 1996), pp. 30-1, 62.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 176, 177, 178.

²⁰ W. A. Speck, 'Mary II (1662-1694)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2007 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18246>, accessed 10 Aug 2007.

the second marriage of the eldest daughter of Sultan Ahmed III. Although the bridegroom was a man of merit, he was much older (aged 50) than the Sultana, which is said to have caused the latter much distress.²¹ Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the prospective bridegroom had to repudiate any former wives before marrying the princess. This suggests an intolerance of polygamy where the sultan's daughters and sisters were concerned. It was believed that the sultan told his daughter that she was given a man for her pleasure and a dagger for her revenge. This is further elaborated by Bon in the following words,

These *Sultanas*, the *Bashaws* wives, are, for the most part, their husbands masters, insulting over them, and commanding them as they please. They always wear at their girdle a Hanjar, (dagger) set with rich stones, in token of privilege and domination, and esteem of their husbands, as of slaves; doing good or evil for them, as they receive content and satisfaction from them, or as they find them to be in favour and powerful with the King.²²

Once married, the newly weds were given a palace into which they moved and the running expense of which was the responsibility of the husband.

Both Bon and Rycaut elaborated on the marriage of princesses of the realm with important officials –

Nay their servitude is thereby increased, and they lose a great part of their former liberty. For they must be very obsequious to the *Sultanas*, whom they have married, and turn away the greatest part of their other women, and slaves if they have any) and must with patience support all their wives imperfections. So that for this reason, few *Bashawes* of worth and judgement, seek after such marriages; for they are both chargeable, and bring discontent.

²¹ Malcolm Jack (ed.), *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Turkish Embassy Letters*, p. 65.

²² Ottaviano Bon, *The Sultan's Seraglio*, p. 53. Although the antiquary James Dallaway's allusion to the princesses being given daggers for their revenge appears to be allegorical, Bon's reference to it seems to be more factual. James Dallaway (1763-1834) who was commissioned by Lord Bute (the grandson of Lady Montagu) to compile her works at the end of the 19th century. His work titled *Constantinople, ancient and modern, with excursions to the shores and islands of the archipelago and to the Troad* (1797) was well regarded in its time. For details see John H. Farrant, 'Dallaway, James (1763-1834)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2005 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7040>, accessed 10 Aug 2007.

Interestingly, Bon here suggests that marriage was more of a restriction on the freedom of the princesses' husband rather than on her. In Rycaut's words:

The Daughters that are born from the Grand Signior, are oftentimes at four or five years of Age wedded to some great *Pasha* or *Beglerbeg* with all the Pomp and solemnities of Marriage, who from that time hath care of her Education; to provide a Palace for her Court, and to maintain her with that state and honour as becomes the dignity of a Daughter to *Sultan*.²³

The tremendous power that princesses held over their husbands was also demonstrated by Evliya Çelebi in his relation of the seventeenth-century statesman Melek Ahmed Paşa's second marriage to Fatma Sultan, the daughter of Ahmed I. According to the Paşa, the then Grand Vizier, Köprülü Paşa had married Fatma Sultan to him without his knowledge or approval while he was away on campaign in Transylvania. Fatma Sultan however, was quick to demand money from him to pay for her extravagant lifestyle on their wedding night itself, adding 'And if you don't – well, you know the consequence!' But when Melek Paşa had tried to explain that it was beyond his means, she simply responded by saying:

My pasha, if you can't get along with me I will divorce you, dead or alive. Be prepared to pay my dowry amounting to an Egyptian treasure.²⁴

This example clearly portrays the helplessness of the husbands of princesses. Not only was Melek Paşa married to an old woman without his knowledge or consent, but was thereafter responsible for his unwanted wife financially. Marriage to a princess was a very delicate issue for princesses could affect the lives and careers of their husbands if the latter did not please them and if matters were irreconcilable, then a divorce could drain the husband's finances entirely because of the enormous dowry that princesses might demand. It is an irony that in an Empire where the Sultan had access to innumerable

²³ Ottaviano Bon, *A description of the Grand Signior's Seraglio or Turkish emperours court* (London, 1650), pp. 154-5 and Paul Rycaut, *Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 40.

²⁴ Robert Dankoff, *The Intimate Life of an Ottoman Statesman, Melek Ahmed Pasha (1588-1662): as portrayed in Evliya Çelebi's Book of Travels (Seyahat-name)* (New York, 1991), pp. 259-61.

concubines, the husbands of his female relatives were forced to sever all ties with former wives and/or concubines.

Only under certain circumstances did princesses permit their husbands a sexual liaison with other women (possibly slave girls), namely the lack of an offspring. An example of an additional alliance in the case of an absence of children was that of the daughter of Selim III and her husband. Nevertheless, a second marriage was still not an option.²⁵ Fidelity and appropriate behaviour towards their princess wives was the basis of a lasting marriage since most marriages to begin with had been initiated in order to form political alliances. If a husband crossed the accepted frontiers of decorum, he was generally stripped off his title and wealth and in some cases even lost his life, as Bon states:

And sometimes they put their husbands away, and take others; but not without the *Grand Seigneur's* leave, which divorce proves commonly to be the death and ruin of the poor rejected husbands, (the King being apt to give way to the will and persuasion of the *Sultanas*: so it behoves them, in any case, to be very obsequious to their wives).²⁶

When Süleyman's sister, Şah Sultan had been assaulted by her husband, Lutfi Paşa, upon her complaint to him regarding his brutal behaviour towards some women, an enraged Süleyman had him stripped off his title and forced him to divorce his wife, but he was at the same time spared his life and his wealth. This led to doubts as to the fabrication of this incident by Şah Sultan in order to procure a divorce from her husband while portraying her image as the triumphant victim. It should be noted that the role of princesses in Ottoman society was gaining significance from the eighteenth century onwards and particularly in the nineteenth century, thereby making it even more imperative for their husbands to honour their monogamous bond.²⁷

²⁵ Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, pp. 142, 144.

²⁶ Ottaviano Bon, *Grand Signor's Seraglio*, p. 48.

²⁷ Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, pp. 142. Also see Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan: culture and daily life in the Ottoman Empire* (London, 2000), p. 103.

Although princesses in both realms did not appear to have a say in the choice of their husbands, Bon and Rycaut's accounts reveal the apparent dominance of princess wives over their husbands. Their power in the realm, it seems depended not only on the favour of the Sultan, but also on that of their wives who had the power to plead for their case or then assign them to doom despite being physically outside the boundaries of the Imperial Harem. The extent of princesses' influence in the political arena via their husbands will be discussed in Chapter 4. Unlike princesses in England, Ottoman princesses were not in the direct line of succession in the absence of a male heir, having only the avenue of indirect influence at their disposal to affect the politics of the time. This was a striking distinction between the English and Ottoman case with direct implications on princesses' participation in politics and consequently the extent of their power and position. The succession of an English princess to the throne raised her status to the highest as monarch with powers to directly affect the politics of her nation, but Ottoman princesses could only indirectly influence Ottoman policies. However, the influence of Ottoman princesses and their status should not be underestimated since they not only held influence with the Sultan on account of their blood relationship with him, but also through their husbands who were themselves invariably officials holding the highest administrative posts and who often influenced the Sultan in policy and decision-making.

1.d) Polygamy vs Monogamy:-

With regard to the other Ottoman elite, in Bon's words,

Any Turk, be he of the Clergie, or of the Laity, may, if he please, take seven wives at *Kebi*, (but few, or none will have more then one, or two at the most, to save charges) besides he may keep as many *Haylayks*, as he will, and the children begotten of them, are held as legitimate, as those of the wives, and have as much right to the inheritance of what the father leaves behinde him.²⁸

According to Rycaut,

Polygamie is freely indulged to them by their Religion as far as the number of four Wives, to the common report, that a *Turk* may have as many Wives as he can maintain'. Each wife had to be provided

²⁸ Ottaviano Bon, *Grand Signor's Seraglio*, p. 150.

with her fair share of the *Mahr* so as 'to prevent and abate somewhat of the Jealousies, Strifes and Embroilments in a Family, which must necessarily arise between so many Rivals in the affection of one Husband who is obliged by Law and Covenants, to deal and bestow his benevolence and conjugal kindness in an exact proportion of equality. And least this consinement to a certain number of Wives, should seem a restriction and impeachment of that liberty and free use of Women which they say, God hath frankly bestowed on man; every one may freely serve himself of his Women Slaves, with as much variety as he is able to buy or maintain; and this kind of Concubinage is no wayes envyed or condemned by the Wives, so long as they can enjoy their due maintenance, and have some reasonable share in the Husbands bed, which once a week is their due by the Law.²⁹

From Bon and Rycaut's descriptions it is clear that although men were limited in the number of wives, they were unrestricted in the number of slave women they could maintain as concubines. However, the size and presence or absence of the harem of a man was dictated by his financial situation, and as Rycaut states, also depended on a desire for peace of mind:

I have known some though childless, have adhered to a single Wife, and preferred Quiet and Repose, before the contentment of their Offspring.³⁰

In the midst of Rycaut's discussion on polygamy and concubinage, he also includes Ottoman notions of the Christian adherence to monogamy:

And here the *Turks* upon occasional discourses of the severity and strictness of the Christian Discipline in matters of Concupiscence, telling them that no Copulation is allowable but in the Marriage Bed, and that restrained and confined to one Wife, without the additions of Slaves to satisfie with variety the corrupted fancy; that the very thoughts of Lust and Concupiscence pollute the purity of the soul; *And that whosoever looks on a Woman to Lust after her, commits adultery in his heart;* They presently deride these our Precepts and

²⁹ Paul Rycaut, *Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 152. Also see Colin Imber, 'Women, Marriage and Property: *Mahr* in the Behcetü'l-Fetava of Yenişehirli Abdullah' in Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Middle East* (New York, 1997), p. 82. As per Islamic Law, a husband is obliged to feed, clothe and protect his wives and fulfil their needs including sexual.

³⁰ Paul Rycaut, *Present State of Ottoman Empire*, p. 153.

our Laws, which Christians not only by their actions and corrupted lives condemn and invalid, but Authority it self not by a simple connivance only, but by indulgence and priviledges, foments and encourages persons walking contrary to that which is confessed to be an indispensable Law.³¹

Therefore, it was apparent that whereas attitudes to polygamy and concubinage appalled Christians, some Ottomans viewed the state of monogamy as most unfortunate.

As the eighteenth century progressed, Lady Wortley Montagu observed that most men of integrity usually had only one wife even though Islam allowed them four:

Tis true, their law permits them four wives, but there is no instance of a man of quality that makes use of this liberty, or of a woman of mark that would suffer it.

Lady Montagu furthermore goes on to give the example of the treasurer (*teftedar*), who was known as a 'libertine' since he kept numerous slave girls for his own pleasure, and on account of this, his wife kept her distance from him. This suggests that some women did not tolerate such disrespect and infidelity on the part of their husbands. We already know that princesses did not permit their husbands to marry again and insisted on them repudiating any former wives before marriage. However, Lady Mary's narration appears to include a wider circle of privileged women than just princesses. Although polygamy did exist in seventeenth-century Bursa, the former capital of the Ottoman Empire, out of 2000 families mentioned in the *kadis'* records, not

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 154.

more than twenty men had two or more wives.³² Whether or not the situation had differed in Bon and Rycaut's time is not definitively stated in their narratives, but it appears to be amply clear that by Lady Wortley Montagu's period in Istanbul, the intolerance to polygamy and/or concubinage was voiced in elite circles and it is probable that Christian practice of monogamy would not have been considered as unfortunate. Since there was a gap of over 50 years between Rycaut's and Lady Montagu's observations, it is possible that attitudes towards polygamy were changing in some elite circles (at least the ones which Lady Montagu was a part of) in favour of monogamy. Since the present study focuses on the core region of Istanbul because of the complexity of cultural diversity and customs in the wide-ranging dominions of the Ottoman Empire, polygamy has been discussed largely in terms of practice in Istanbul and its immediate neighbouring regions. It appeared therefore that polygamy was not widely-practised. While sexual practices and reproduction among the sultans revolved around concubinage, the sexual alliances of those male Ottoman aristocrats who married princesses (if Lady Montagu's observations are taken as accurate) were largely dictated by their royal wives. It was perhaps mainly amongst the middle class that polygamy existed, for the lower class and the poor were less likely to have been able to afford two or more wives. Although it is true that the lack of wealth did not necessarily exclude the poor man from marrying more than once, the practical obstacles to polygamy possibly outweighed the status that was attached to it in male circles.

1.e) The Upper and Middle Class:-

England:-

Dorothy Stetson emphasises the fact that Englishwomen in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were brought up in such a way that they were geared towards marriage: 'According to English custom, all women are wives,

³² Malcolm Jack (ed.), *Turkish Embassy Letters*, p. 65. See Haim Gerber, 'Social and Economic Position of Women in an Ottoman City, Bursa', in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 12 (1980) p. 2

potential wives, or former wives'.³³ Common law did not recognise a married woman as a separate entity; upon marriage both husband and wife were seen as one person, and that person was the husband. According to the authors of *The Lawes Resolutions of Women's Rights* (printed in 1632, but perhaps written by lawyers in the late sixteenth century), 'All of them are understood either married or to be married and their desires are subject to their husband.'³⁴ It goes on to say, 'A woman as soone as she is married is called covert, in Latine *nupta*, that is, vailed, as it were, clouded and overshadowed.'³⁵ Therefore the authority of their husbands in the eyes of the law was undisputed and paramount. And in William Whately's words, contentment in marriage could be achieved if the following was comprehended:

If ever thou purpose to be a good wife, and to live comfortably, set down this with thyself: mine husband is my superior, my better; he hath authority and rule over me; nature hath given it to him...God hath given it to him.³⁶

The distinction in gender, according to Mendelson and Crawford, was ingrained in and dictated every sphere of social and religious activity.³⁷ Almost every aspect of the social milieu was steeped in the idea of female subordination, first to her father and then to her husband. One of the justifications for this even went as far as to suggest that certain physical attributes or deficiencies made it necessary for women to surrender their will and display the attributes of 'chastity, obedience, piety and silence'. Medical notions of women's inferiority in the sixteenth century were influenced by Galen, the second-century Roman physician who believed that women's

³³ Dorothy M. Stetson, *A woman's issue: the politics of family law reform in England* (Westport, 1982), p. 3. Patricia Crawford states that both men and women derived their status from their fathers. However, once married, a woman's status was determined through her husband's social standing. See Patricia Crawford, 'From the Woman's View' in *Exploring Women's Past* (London, 1984), p. 49.

³⁴ Sara Mendelson, *The Mental World of Stuart Women, three studies* (Brighton, 1987), p. 2.

³⁵ For a discussion of the concept of man and wife being one person in marriage see *The Lawes Resolutions of Women's Rights* (Amsterdam, 1979), pp. 4-5, 116-7. Also Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (eds), *Women, Texts & Histories, 1575-1760* (London, 1992), p. 176.

³⁶ William Whately, *A bride-bush. Or, A direction for married persons Plainely describing the duties common to both, and peculiar to each of them. By performing of which, marriage shall prooue a great helpe to such, as now for want of performing them, doe finde it a little Hell. Compiled and published by William Whateley, minister and preacher of Gods Word, in Banbury in Oxford-shiere* (London, 1617), p. 36. Also see Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1977), p. 151.

³⁷ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 32.

bodies were a variant of men's. Menstruation was explained by stating that women produced more blood from the food they consumed and that was discharged on a monthly basis. The fumes of that accumulated excess impure blood in their bodies were believed to affect their brains and impair their mental faculties. Therefore, women who experienced a delayed menstruation were seen as being in a 'dangerous state'. In the 'natural' order, women were seen as being comprised of cold and wet humours with a greater lustful nature than men. Therefore, they were constantly instructed to suppress these lower passions, which, it was believed, dominated over reason and intellect. The fear was that this 'physiological disorderliness' would transfer itself into the social context and result in the domination of women over men. The desirable woman then was not ruled by nature, but had successfully suppressed her lower nature and remained subject to male authority.³⁸

The extent to which religion ruled the lives of early modern Englishwomen can be seen through their diaries which recorded every detail of their daily routine, which in turn was dominated by religious study and prayer. In fact, one of the primary purposes of maintaining a diary was to keep an account of their religious activities. This was probably a consequence of the shift of religious responsibility from the outer spectrum of priests and idol representation, to the inner soul and conscience. A detailed record of private prayer and study is apparent in Lady Margaret Hoby's (1571-1633) diary maintained between 1599 and 1605. It appears that the purpose of her diary-keeping at the outset was primarily to enable moral preservation and self-correction. Most of the entries in the first few years of her diary keeping are dominated by a record of her 'privatt praiers', thereby suggesting that prayer and the reading of the Bible constituted the prime obligation in her life. As the diary progresses, the entries become shorter, less detailed and towards the end she mainly documented persons and activities that she had not considered significant enough to document earlier as they had not been connected to her religious

³⁸ Patricia Crawford, 'From the Woman's View' in *Exploring Women's Past*, p. 63. Also see Elspeth Graham et al (eds), *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-century Englishwomen* (London, 1989), pp. 7-8.

activities. The change was that in the later entries time spent in private prayer was meant to be taken for granted by the reader.

In Blodgett's opinion, by 1605 her diary had taken on a predominantly domestic flavour. For instance, on 7 January, 1600 she wrote:

After I had praised god for my rest and was readie, I went about the house, then I returned to priuatt praier: after, I had eate my breakfast, and againe was busie till all most dinner time: then I praied, dined, and, after, went into the toune about som business: then I was in the granerie receiuing Corne, and againe took order for supper and hard one of my wemen read of perkins, and, after that returned to priuat praier and examination: then, some after, I went to supper, after that to the lector, then to priuat praer, and so to bed:

And on 5 October, 1603 she recorded:

Mr. Hoby, my Mother, and my selfe, went to the dalls this day: we had in our Gardens a second sommer, for Hartechokes bare twisse, whitt Rosses, Read Rosses, and we, hauing sett a musk Rose the winter before, it bare flowers now. I thinke the Like hath seldom binn seene: it is a great frute year all over.³⁹

From the two accounts above, the shift from prayer to domestic details is evident.

Her daily activities ranged from praying and attending church to playing the role of hostess and local doctor. However, Hoby allowed herself to believe that any physical discomfort or harm that might have afflicted her, was a consequence of her sins and the method chosen by God to make her repent for them. Similarly, she also appeared to have taken marital discord (which is evident from certain statements in her diary) in her stride, and therefore did not voice any direct complaints.⁴⁰

³⁹ Joanna Moody (ed.), *The private life of an Elizabethan lady: the diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599-1605* (Stroud, 2001), pp. 51, 194.

⁴⁰ Harriet Blodgett, *Centuries of Female Days, Englishwomen's Private Diaries* (New Brunswick, 1988), p. 76. For instance, she says that she 'wrett an answer to a demand that Mr. Hoby had given me ouernight' and, as Blodgett marks, the fact that they communicated in writing while dwelling on the same premises was in itself a sign of tension. Joanna Moody (ed.), *The private life of an Elizabethan lady*, pp. 99-100.

The *Occasional Meditations* of Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick (1625-1678), also displays the extent to which religion gripped her existence. A few years after her marriage (in 1647) Mary found herself leaning towards religious life. Her daily routine was dominated by prayer and later she even admitted that she found that she was,

in company miserably distracted' as it strayed her mind away from religious devotion and 'that when they came to see me they were a burden to me, yet I by sad experience fonde that they did hendre me in my journey to Heaven'.⁴¹

Religion was so deeply embedded in her being that she blamed herself for her son's death in 1664 by stating, 'But I fear most that I sinn'd him away, and 'tis for my Transgression that God hath snatcht him hence'.⁴²

Another motivating factor was the desire to document God's mercies throughout their lives, as was the case with the seventeenth-century autobiography of Alice Thornton (1627-1706). Thornton's autobiography exudes submissiveness through her account of physical, financial and emotional suffering and her religious faith which delivered her from this suffering. She bears all her physical and emotional sufferings with the utmost forbearance, praising the Lord throughout and stating that these were trials in life so that 'I might prepare more earnestly and long for those lasting joys that never shall have end'.⁴³

It is also noted that because religion constituted much of female diary-keeping, some diaries reflected an internal struggle between the maintenance of the doctrine of wifely subjection and the expression of individual will. Religion was also perceived at times as a happy alternative to an unhappy

⁴¹ Harriet Blodgett, *Centuries of Female Days*, p. 86.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 90. Her role model was her sister, Lady Ranelagh, who, along with being religiously orientated, was also an important member of society with political influence. For further information on Lady Ranelagh, see C. Webster *The Great Instauration, science, medicine and reform, 1626-1660* (London, 1975), pp. 40, 62-3, 86, 308, 419, 433, 501. Also, Gilbert Burnet *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Honourable Robert Boyle: at St. Martins in the Fields, January 7. 1691/2* (London, 1692), p. 33.

⁴³ Elspeth Graham et al (eds), *Her Own Life*, pp. 148-9, 157. Charles Jackson (ed.), *The autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton of East Newton, Co. York* (Durham, 1875).

union. Elizabeth Cavendish, the Countess of Bridgewater (1626-1663), in this respect remarked:

If he [the husband] be fickle and various, not careing much to be with his wife at home, then thus may the wife make her own happinesse, for then she may give her self up in prayer...and thus, in his absence, she is as much God's as a virgine...⁴⁴

In general women's diaries were gender-orientated rather than class-focused and revolved around the duties and activities that were associated with the three main stages of a woman's life, namely maidenhood, marriage and widowhood. For instance, Mendelson notes that fear of childbirth, the death of a child, joys of seeing a child grow up, widowhood and the financial deprivation that some suffered at the hands of relatives thereafter were also chronicled in women's diaries. Most activities documented were those within the household and therefore within the private sphere. However, Mendelson suggests that if diaries had been maintained (and had been preserved) by the lower class, they would perhaps have revealed their activities in the public sphere outside the realm of their households. Not all of the existing diaries however, were entirely private, evidence of which exists in the form of the diary of Lady Mary Cowper (1685-1724). After gaining access to the court by her appointment as the Lady of the Bedchamber to Caroline, Princess of Wales, the entries in her account throw little light on her own life and concentrate more on the inner workings of court. Some early diaries, such as that of Lady Isabella Twysden's Civil War diary, recorded only the bare minimum of important events in her life.⁴⁵

Some women however were not as religiously inclined in their writings as the case of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (1623-73), reveals:

True it is, Spinning with the Fingers is more proper to our Sexe, than Studying or writing Poetry, which is the Spinning with the

⁴⁴ Betty Travitsky (ed.), *Subordination and authorship in early modern England: the case of Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton and her "loose papers"* (Arizona, 1999), p. 191.

⁴⁵ Sara Mendelson, 'Stuart Women's Diaries and Occasional Memoirs', in Mary Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society, 1500-1800* (London, 1991), pp. 184-5, 187, 190, 194, 198-9, 200-1. Also see Harriet Blodgett, *Centuries of Female Days*, pp. 30, 40.

braine: but I having no skill in the Art of the first...made me delight in the latter...⁴⁶

Cavendish's perception of women and marriage is very interesting. About women she says:

...it is very strange, since every Creature naturally desires and strives for prehemincy, as to be superiour and not inferiour...and are unwilling to obey, even the Beasts of the Field, the Birds of the Air, and the Fishes in the Sea...only Women, who seem to have the meanest souls of all the Creatures Nature hath made, for women are so far from indeavouring to get power, as they voluntarily give away what they have.⁴⁷

Marriage was not an institution of which she approved, even though she herself was married and admitted that not all men were as considerate as her husband.⁴⁸

Since chastity, silence and modesty were viewed as virtuous in women, this tradition was instilled in and continued by women and was reinforced by religion. Therefore, although Lady Anne Clifford (1590-1676) showed signs of non-conformity to her husband's authority by challenging him in court, her inherent docility and Christian upbringing enabled her to suffer her husband's unfaithfulness in silence and with forbearance.⁴⁹ Therefore it appeared that her ideas of propriety and modesty did not permit her to directly confront her husband in their private life, although her sense of justice compelled her to confront him in court to obtain what she perceived was rightfully hers. Religion could provide comfort in joy and sorrow. Adversity was perceived as punishment for their sins, as in the case of Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick (1624-1678), who blamed herself for the death of her son. Ironically it was religion that at times enabled them to reconcile themselves to their subjection to their husbands and to accept it with greater ease. There are many

⁴⁶ Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies*, The Epistle Dedicatory (London, 1653), p. A2r.

⁴⁷ Margaret Cavendish, *Playes written by the thrice noble, illustrious and excellent princess, the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle* (London, 1662), p. 254.

⁴⁸ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 32.

⁴⁹ Richard T. Spence, 'Clifford, Anne, countess of Pembroke, Dorset, and Montgomery (1590-1676)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5641>, accessed 9 Aug 2007.

instances of cruelty as well as physical violence used by husbands towards their wives, evident in some personal diaries. For example, through *The Legacy of a Dying Mother...being the experiences of Mrs. Susannah Bell* (1673), we learn that she initially refused to go to New England with her husband. However, when her husband separated her from her child, she explained God's action by attributing it to her refusal to accompany him and thereafter submitted to her husband's wishes.⁵⁰ The case of Anne Dormer (1648?-1695), wife of Robert Dormer and sister of Lady Elizabeth Trumbull, is an instance which demonstrated that her husband's power over her even lingered after his death. Her letters which she wrote to her sister over a six-year period reveal information of both her daily activities as well as marital strife.⁵¹ Others like Mary Rich, sought the strength necessary to deal with an insufferable union by turning to religion.⁵² Women in unsatisfactory marriages were aptly described at the turn of the eighteenth century by Lady Chudleigh as follows:

They are like Victims to the Alter (sic) led,
Born for Destruction, and for Ruine bred;
Forc'd to Sigh out each long revolving Year,
And see their Lives all spent in Toil and Care.⁵³

While in some cases recourse to religious devotion resulted in quiet domestic submission, in others it provided wives with the strength to defy their husbands' wishes and authority, as in Anne Wentworth's case who considered her duty to God to be above that to her husband.⁵⁴

Based on various interpretations of the scriptures, a general picture of the conventional roles designated to both men and women had emerged by the

⁵⁰ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 137.

⁵¹ Mary E. O'Connor, 'Dormer, Anne (1648?-1695)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/66726>, accessed 9 Aug 2007.

⁵² Sara Mendelson, 'Rich, Mary, countess of Warwick (1624-1678)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23487>, accessed 9 Aug 2007. Also see Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 137.

⁵³ Mary Chudleigh, *The Ladies Defence* (London, 1701), p. 5. Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, pp. 136, 137-8, 141. For details of Anne Dormer's case see Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, pp. 138-9.

⁵⁴ See below p. 125 for details of Anne Wentworth, *A vindication of Anne Wentworth* (London, 1677), pp. 4-5. Also see Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, pp. 138-9.

early modern period. The husband was viewed as the superior, whose obligations and responsibilities often kept him away from home; while all the responsibilities that fell within the precincts of the household (such as the kitchen, garden, the rearing of children, managing servants and even minor medical matters) were the wife's domain. According to the diplomat and political theorist Sir Thomas Smith in *De Republica Anglorum, The Maner of the Governement or Policie of the Realme of England* (1583):

the man to get, to trauaile abroad, to defende: the wife, to saue that which is gotten, to tarrie at home to distribute that which commeth of the husbandes labor... and to keepe all at home neat and cleane.⁵⁵

In the table of contents of his book, *The English Housewife* (1618), Gervase Markham lays down the tasks of women as:

physic, surgery, the extraction of oyls, banqueting stuff, ordering of great feasts, preserving of all sorts of wines...distillations, perfumes, ordering of wool, hempe, flax, making cloth, dying, the knowledge of dairies, office of malting, oats, brewing baking...⁵⁶

Markham's household manual, along with that of his predecessor Thomas Tusser, entitled *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry* (1573), constituted a detailed guide of a 'complete' woman.

In his first section, *A housewife must be religious*, he states that a housewife must be of an 'upright and sincere religion'. Although he feels it necessary for her to instruct her family about Godly virtues, at the same time he does not:

⁵⁵ Ralph Houlbrooke, *English Family*, p. 106. Sir Thomas Smith, *De republica Anglorum The maner of gouernement or policie of the realme of England* (London, 1583), p. 12.

⁵⁶ Gervase Markham, *The English Housewife* (London, 1618), title page. Sara Mendelson, *Mental World of Stuart Women*, p. 7-8.

mean that herein she should utter forth that violence of spirit which many of our (vainly accounted pure) women do, drawing a contempt upon the ordinary ministry, thinking nothing lawful but the fantasies of their own inventions, usurping to themselves a power of preaching and interpreting the holy word, to which they ought to be but hearers and believers, or at the most but modest persuaders; this is not the office either of good housewife or good woman.

In the following section titled *She must be temperate*, he states that the housewife should be both inwardly and outwardly of

great modesty and temperance...inwardly, as in her behaviour and carriage towards her husband, wherein she shall shun all violence of rage, passion and humour, coveting less to direct than to be directed, appearing ever unto him pleasant, amiable, and delightful; and though occasion, mishaps, or the misgovernment of his will may induce her to contrary thoughts, yet virtuously to suppress them, and with a mild sufferance rather to call him home from his error, than with the strength of anger to abate the least spark of his evil, calling into her mind that evil and uncomely language is deformed though uttered even to servants, but most monstrous and ugly when it appears in the presence of a husband.

Outwardly, she should be modest both in her apparel and diet. Her garments should be 'comely, cleanly, and strong,...and as far from the vanity of new and fantastic fashions, as near to the comely imitations of modest matrons.' Her diet should be 'wholesome' and 'cleanly' and cooked from ingredients from her own yard rather than from those purchased from a market, and 'let it be rather esteemed for the familiar acquaintances she hath with it, than the strangeness and rarity it bringeth from other countries.'

He concluded by saying that the English housewife should be of

chaste thought, stout courage, patient, untired, watchful, diligent, witty, pleasant, constant in friendship, full of good neighbourhood, wise in discourse, but not frequent therein, sharp and quick of speech, but not bitter or talkative, secret in her affairs, comfortable in her counsels, and generally skilled in all the worthy knowledges which do belong to her vocation;.

In his second chapter titled, *Of the outward and active knowledge of the housewife; and first of her skill in cookery; as sallats of all sorts, with flesh, fish, sauces, pastry, banqueting stuff, and ordering of great feasts*, he

considers the skill of cookery to be the foremost among the outward virtues of the housewife, since without that she would be able to fulfil only half of her marriage vow. Although she would 'love and obey', she would not be able to 'serve and keep him with that true duty which is ever expected.'⁵⁷

It is clear that Markham's image of the English housewife was in keeping with the simplicity and virtuousness that Christian doctrine demanded. Although her supreme position with respect to the running of her home is evident, her submissiveness to her husband, pleasant temperament and modest appearance and behaviour are overriding features. In other words, any desires and nature to the contrary had to be suppressed and/or governed by these principles. As Michael Roberts points out, the 'completeness' of a woman was inseparable from her duties within her household. Religion and prayer, which featured prominently in female diaries, interestingly enough did not feature in Markham's perception of the role of 'complete' woman. In his opinion, women should largely be passive listeners and believers rather than active preachers. The role of an active though moderate preacher could be exercised by the housewife only in relation to her servants in order to ensure a secure religious foundation within the household. As William Gouge in his *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622) stated, 'She may do nothing against God's will, but many things must she do against her own will, if her husband require her.' This notion was a theme in numerous debates thereafter. If women were prevented from following their spiritual duties by their husbands' will, then they were meant to turn to God and ask for guidance.⁵⁸ Mary Astell (1668-1730) in *Some Reflections Upon marriage* (1700), summed up women's obligations towards their husbands as follows:

It is a Woman's Happiness to hear, admire and praise them, especially if a little Ill-nature keeps them at any time from bestowing the Applauses to each other! And if she aspires no further, she is

⁵⁷ Gervase Markham, *The English Housewife*, pp. 5, 7, 8, 60.

⁵⁸ Michael Roberts, ' "To bridle the falsehood of unconscionable workmen, and for her own satisfaction" ' in *Labour History Review*, 63.1 (Spring 1998), p. 2. William Gouge, *Of Domesticall duties eight treatises. I. An exposition of that part of Scripture out of which Domesticall duties are raised. ... VIII. Duties of masters* (London, 1622), p. 337.

thought to be in her proper Sphere of Action, she is as wise and as good as can be expected from her!⁵⁹

As pointed out by Mendelson, 'modesty' played an encompassing role in the lives of women. It was instrumental in attributing gender specific roles. Hence, attributes associated with men were frowned upon if observed in a woman, since there was the element of threat to male exclusivity and superiority in particular and the natural order in general.⁶⁰ This resulted in the greater emphasis placed on attributes in women which were explicitly perceived as feminine, thereby sharpening the schism between masculine and feminine.

Affection and love in marriage was an ambiguous issue in England and varied as per individual situations. As Mendelson and Crawford aptly suggest, a loving and affectionate relationship in marriage could exist within the patriarchal hierarchy and it was the inequality of the sexes in the social, political and religious framework that was maintained by men as opposed to an endeavour towards achieving equality of the sexes. Therefore authority and affection, which were theoretically distinct, were in practice often coexistent. Human affection, together with St. Peter's call for love within marriage tended to smooth out the rigidity and harshness of hierarchical authoritarianism. An interesting fact is that wifely subjection was often perceived as love for her husband and a rebellious nature as the loss of love.⁶¹ Margaret Cavendish, who married the Marquis of Newcastle (who later rose to Dukedom),⁶² declared her affection for her husband as strong, a fact

⁵⁹ Mary Astell, *Some Reflections Upon Marriage: Occasioned by the Duke and Dutchess of Mazarine's Case; Which is Also Considered* (London, 1700), pp. 59-60. Astell was the daughter of a Newcastle coal merchant. Although she wrote anonymously, she was recognised as the author of her works. Recognising the difficulty in finding a suitable spouse perhaps led her to remain unmarried throughout her life.

⁶⁰ Sara Mendelson, *Mental World of Stuart Women*, p. 35.

⁶¹ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 132, 133. There are written instances of women's deep love for their husbands and vice versa. Houlbrooke for instance believes that mutual love was as integral a feature of medieval society as it was in the seventeenth century. See Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 21.

⁶² Newcastle received his dukedom in 1665, Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in early modern England*, p. 50. Margaret was his second wife, and she used this fact as one of the reasons for narrating her life in writing – so that people would not confuse her with the Duke's first wife, or with any other wives he might choose to marry after her death. See C.H. Firth (ed.), *The life of William Cavendish*,

which is mirrored in certain passages of her autobiography. Although she held a cynical view of romance and amorous love, she confessed that 'he (her husband) was the only Person I ever was in love with'.⁶³

The main purpose of marriage in most cultures was procreation and England was no exception. Child-bearing and childrearing were the two most important duties of a wife. Women took great pride in pregnancy, although the fear of delivery and death during childbirth bubbled under the surface. For instance, the death of Alice Thornton's elder sister during pregnancy was a contributing factor to her initial opposition to matrimony. A married woman was seen as incomplete without a child. Therefore, even though Margaret Cavendish criticized the fuss made over pregnancy and child bearing, the fact that she had no children was cause for concern.⁶⁴

Ottoman Empire:-

Where the role of religion in the lives of Ottoman women was concerned, we have seen that western observers either had little knowledge of women's religious activities or paid little attention to them; they then condemned women as base, immoral or inferior beings not worthy of an equal spiritual status as men as a consequence of their lack of religious faith. What we do know through some accounts (of Bobovi for instance) is that some women did pray at home and since most of the observers were men and consequently forbidden from female contact, women's religious activities within the home remained unchronicled. There is also however no indication from Lady Montagu of such devotions despite her close contact with the women of the harem. Nor do we have any diaries or autobiographies written by early modern Ottoman women, or any material chronicling details of their religious activities. One of the possible explanations is that following the Islamic doctrine of praying five times a day sufficiently monitored their religious activities on a daily basis. The English narratives under study also do not contain a reference to household manuals such as those of Markham and

Duke of Newcastle: to which is added the true relation of my birth, breeding and life / by Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle (London, 1906), p. 178.

⁶³ Margaret Cavendish, *Natures Pictures drawn by Fancies Pencil* (1656), p. 375.

⁶⁴ Patricia Crawford, 'From the Woman's View' in *Exploring Women's Past*, p. 74

Gouge which laid down the duties of husbands and wives in the Ottoman realm. A possible explanation is that with a network such as the Imperial Harem and a Sultan who did not marry, it might have seemed to an extent redundant or unnecessary since inherent within the Imperial Harem itself were perhaps all the rules, regulations, responsibilities and duties required to govern each member. The absence of household manuals in a slave hierarchy as was the Imperial Harem was however counteracted by Islamic law which detailed the purchase, sale, treatment and marriage of slaves. Clear expectations of roles spelled out in household manuals were viewed as a guide for English domestic life whereas Ottoman slave society was governed by Islamic law on slavery. It can therefore be argued that in this instance it was Islamic slave law which in a sense fulfilled the function that household manuals did in England. Where the rest of the Ottoman aristocracy was concerned, once again the detailed description of the relationship, rights and responsibilities of husband and wife in the Qur'an, *Hadith* and *Sharia* was most likely seen as the governing force for a successful marriage.

The general view of wives (with the exception perhaps of the princesses), their submissiveness, seclusion and extent to which they were perceived as subordinate is however illustrated by the traveller Henry Blount (1602-1682) in his travelogue *A Voyage into the Levant* (1636).⁶⁵ While travelling with the Ottoman army Blount observed the opulence with which generals went to war. Along with their war weaponry went their wives and concubines about whom Blount states:

beside these wives, each *Basha* hath as many, or likely more *Catamites*, which are their serious loves; for their Wives are used (as the Turkes themselves told me) but to dresse their meat, to Laundresse, and for reputation.⁶⁶

In addition, Aaron Hill observed through the following passage: –

⁶⁵ Henry Blount, *A voyage into the Levant. A breife relation of a iourney, lately performed by Master H. B. Gentleman, from England by the way of Venice, into Dal[matia,] Sclavonia, Bosnah, Hungary, Macedonia, Thessaly, Thrace, Rhodes and Egypt, unto Gran Cairo: / [W]ith particular observations concerning the moderne condition of the Turkes, and other people under that empire* (London, 1636).

⁶⁶ Gerald MacLean, *Rise of Oriental Travel: English visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580-1720* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 14.

Again, (tho' I'll not give my *Country Women* cause of Anger by affirming that as preferable an Advantage as the former) they boast a sort of unconfin'd Authority, which makes their *Wives* submissively Obedient; but since it ne'er allows that mutual Confidence, that *generous, free* and open *familiarity*, so requisite to make a Marriage truly happy, I cannot praise their Policy in robbing *Wives* of that well tolerated Liberty, which serves to soften Matrimonial Bondage, and proves a sure and winning Mark of *conjugal Good-nature*....The good Effects of *Turkish Discipline* surpriz'd me much, when I perceiv'd that notwithstanding their severe Behaviour towards their *Wives*, the *patient Turtles* were so far from less'ning their Affection *on Confinement*, that they rather doubled their respect, and *Spaniel-like* fawn'd humbly on their Injurers.⁶⁷

Whether or not Hill considered the institution of marriage as a form of bondage in the oppressive sense is unclear, but what is obvious is that he did consider the position of wives within the marriage institution in England in a much more favourable light than in the Ottoman Empire.

According to Colin Imber, male control over female sexuality was another facet of the subordination that women experienced. Sexual intercourse after marriage was viewed as a loss of ownership on the part of the wife of her sexual organs to her husband and the *Hanafi* jurists (one of the four schools of Islamic law generally followed by the Sunni sect of Islam) perceived the *Mahr* as an exchange or compensation for this loss. Imber goes on to express the *Hanafi* custom of making two payments at the time of matrimony; the *Mahr* and the *Nafaqa*, which was a payment for the acquisition of the right of confinement. The jurists suggest that the absence of such a restraint by the husband on his wife's sexuality would result in social and moral disharmony. Similar restraints on men's sexuality were not a consideration since it was probably believed by men that their sexual promiscuousness would not result in disorder. This was yet another instance of the manner in which interpretations of the *Sharia* resulted in female subordination.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Aaron Hill, *A full and just account of the present of the Ottoman empire*, p. 97.

⁶⁸ Colin Imber, 'Women, Marriage and Property', in *Women in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 87, 88. Although this study is largely confined to the Istanbul area, it is important to note that affluent women in seventeenth-century Egypt in general and (as Nelly Hanna has shown) among merchant families in Cairo in particular, made use of the courts to formulate pre-marriage contracts with a variety of

Lady Montagu briefly discusses the issue of women's seclusion in one of her letters. As noted earlier, during her stay in Belgrade, which was under Turkish dominion, she stayed in the house of a learned Turk, Achmed Bey, who was well-versed in Arabic and Persian and with whom Lady Montagu had many a lively discussion; one of which was on the seclusion of women:

He assures me, there is nothing at all in it; only, says he, we have the advantage that when our wives cheat us nobody knows it.⁶⁹

Ottaviano Bon however, used the fact that women could conceal their actions effectively behind their veils to emphasize the negative character of women who, according to him, often took undue advantage of this situation. He summed up women as:

being extraordinarily wanton...very dishonest and lascivious, who taking the opportunity of their husbands absence, at the wars, or in some long journey, under colour of going to the bagnos, and being covered with all, go whither, and to whom they lust, knowing that the worst of it is to be put away, if so be it (that they) should at any time be discovered.⁷⁰

What is clear is that the Turks did realize the likelihood of infidelity 'under cover' so to speak, since as also revealed by Bon, women's 'deportment' was under close scrutiny by the Imams who were in charge of reporting them to their husbands or fathers (if unmarried) if they were discovered.⁷¹ Imams were after all the religious leaders of the community who were not only highly respected, but held the power to exercise their authority in matters of religion and social propriety.

stipulations which would ensure the preservation of their freedom of movement and rights of property for instance or to ensure the prevention of their husband's marrying again. As Abdul-Rehim has shown, women in Egypt in practise did not lead helpless or secluded lives, but were involved in the social and economic life of the community. Nelly Hanna, "Marriage among Merchant Families in Seventeenth-century Cairo", 146, 147, 151-54 and Abdal-Rehim Abdal-Rahman Abdal-Rehim, "The Family and Gender Laws in Egypt during the Ottoman Period", pp. 110-111, in Amira El Azhary Sombol (ed.), *Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws in Islamic History* (Syracuse, 1996). For further information on the household in Ottoman Egypt see Jane Hathaway, *The politics of households in Ottoman Egypt : the rise of the Qazdaglis* (Cambridge, 1997).

⁶⁹ Malcolm Jack (ed.), *Turkish Embassy Letters*, pp. 53-4. Lady Montagu's quotation has also been quoted earlier on p. 60 to further the discussion.

⁷⁰ Ottaviano Bon, *A description of the Grand Signor's Seraglio*, p. 191.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.191.

Ottoman society was also governed by clear-cut role differentiation on the basis of gender as laid down in the Qur'an. Women's involvement in spheres which were deemed purely masculine such as politics was perceived as an encroachment and criticized as will be discussed later. The feminine virtue of modesty was also highly valued in Ottoman women as Bon's narrative clearly reflects women's 'honesty, and good carriage is much looked after; the *Imawms* of every parish being bound to harken diligently after their deportment'.⁷² Therefore, although there is no evidence of the existence of any household manuals as in the case of England, it is clear that modesty, chastity, obedience and submission of women were regarded as the main virtues in a woman and a good wife.

The respect given to a woman was based on the number of her children. According to Lady Montagu, 'tis more despicable to be marr'd and not fruitfull, than 'tis with us to be fruitfull befor Marriage.' An ancient Ottoman adage was also proof of the importance given to childbearing: 'A house with children is a bazaar: without them it is a cemetery.' Sterility on the part of a wife was one of the main causes of divorce and everything possible, even sorcery, was indulged in, in order to avert it. One of the worst curses directed towards a woman was, 'May you be childless'.⁷³ However, Evliya Çelebi's account of Princess Kaya's (the wife of his patron Melek Ahmed Paşa) fears of death in childbirth was a general fear which prevailed amongst women.⁷⁴ One of the two references he makes to his mother includes the employment of certain Egyptian stones which were believed to have prevented pregnancy if worn during intercourse. As in his mother's case these were used by women who had gone through the pains of childbirth once and did not wish to suffer them again.⁷⁵

⁷² *Ibid*, pp. 190-91

⁷³ Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 78. In Bosnia, barren women could be deserted by their husbands even if the bond was one which had been founded on love.

⁷⁴ Malcolm Jack (ed.), *Turkish Embassy Letters*, pp. 100, 110 and Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 107.

⁷⁵ Robert Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality: the World of Evliya Çelebi* (Brill, 2004), p. 23.

Specific rules concerning reproduction were strictly adhered to in the royal harem. Each concubine was allowed to bear only one son. Once she had borne a son (she may have had numerous daughters before this), she was no longer sexually useful to the Sultan. Since the primary purpose of women's existence in the eyes of the Turks was bearing and taking care of children, 'any woman that dies unmarried is looked upon to die in a state of reprobation.' In a letter to Antonio Conti, the Italian dramatist, Lady Montagu described the opinion and role of women in the eyes of Prophet Muhammad, wherein it was said that on account of the physical weakness of women, they were not cut out for the strains of war or politics:

but he (God) has entrusted them with an office which is not less honourable, even that of multiplying the human race. And such as, out of malice or laziness do not make it their business to bear or to breed children fulfil not the duty of their vocation and rebel against the commands of God.⁷⁶

It is not certain the extent to which love developed between husband and wife in the Ottoman context after marriage. There are instances however, of a princess' love for her husband being the instrumental factor in the saving of her husband's life, exemplified through the case of Murad III's sister, Fatma Sultan and her husband, Siyavuş Paşa.⁷⁷ Yet another example was that of Melek Ahmed Paşa (1588-1662), whose anguish upon his wife, Kaya Sultan's death during childbirth was elaborated by Evliya Çelebi in his account.⁷⁸ The extent of his sorrow was so intense that Köprülü Mehmet Paşa rebuked him saying, 'You ought to be ashamed of yourself. She was only a woman.'⁷⁹ Although Aaron Hill creates the impression that love was absent in an Ottoman marriage, it appears that like England, love and mutual affection could also exist within patriarchal Ottoman society as long as there was the clear understanding and implementation of gendered role-differentiation within the marital context.

⁷⁶ Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 107.

⁷⁷ Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, pp. 144, 145.

⁷⁸ Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 102-4. Melek Ahmed was the Grand Vizier and son-in-law of Murad IV, married to his daughter Kaya Sultan, Leslie Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 147.

⁷⁹ Dankoff, *Intimate Life of an Ottoman Statesman*, p. 234. Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, pp. 102, 104, 106 and Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, pp. 143-4 for details on all the marriages of Fatma Sultan and her sister.

1.f) The lower class and the poor:-

England:-

As Patricia Crawford has shown, late marriages in pre-industrial England (1500-1750) were common among the poorer labourers, although individual cases varied based on economic and regional differences. Sons and daughters left home at an early age to seek employment and many of them met their spouses under these circumstances. Because of the insufficient earnings, younger sons particularly, were forced to carve out their own means of living by adopting some form of apprenticeship in the towns or positions of live-in employees with wealthy gentry or land owners. Consequently, they could not contemplate marriage until they had established themselves, albeit in some small measure. Many women too left home at an early age to work in the homes of gentry or yeoman families.⁸⁰ Since a large number of them often lost contact with their parents if they worked a great distance from them, marriages often took place through personal choice and without parental opposition or intervention.⁸¹ However, one of the most important criteria (apart from dowry considerations) while selecting a suitable wife was still her obedient and docile nature, qualities that were viewed as most desirable and preached and reinforced by priests in their sermons.

It would be tempting to assume that couples among the lower class were emotionally close particularly because husbands and wives often worked together, for instance, on their farm or in their shops, as equal bread winners in the family setting. Moreover, it is likely that love and personal attraction played a greater role in the selection process of those who met their partners in their work environment.⁸² However, it would not be accurate to overemphasize the contrast of female subordination between the different sections of society, because lower class and poor women were still dependent on their husbands and subordinate in status. Particularly among the labouring

⁸⁰ Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, pp. 63-8.

⁸¹ Patricia Crawford, 'From the Woman's View' in *Exploring Women's Past*, pp. 50-51.

⁸² J.A. Sharpe, *Early Modern England*, pp. 68-9. See also Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, pp. 102-5.

poor, the servitude of women throughout their lives was even more pronounced, beginning with their fathers, they continued their subordination as live-in servants to their masters and finally to their husbands. As per Mendelson and Crawford's view, the situation varied from family to family and much depended on the nature of the husband. Their suggestion appears to be a more likely phenomenon.⁸³

The marriage law of England was based on medieval canon law which was relatively lax. While Catholic and Protestant Europe had altered this medieval marriage law, it remained in England and was 'revised and restated' in the Canons of 1604 by the ecclesiastical courts. This made it easy to marry while getting out of an unhappy union was still very difficult. It was not until 1753 that the medieval marriage law was tightened by the Hardwick Marriage Act making it compulsory for all marriages to be performed in an Anglican church and be officiated by Anglican clergy. Most matters relating to marriage were administered by the ecclesiastical courts.⁸⁴

Customary unions, bigamy, concubinage, clandestine and incestuous marriages were all existent despite being theoretically illegal. The laxity and ambiguity of medieval canon law made it easier for some of these unions to occur and exist. However, these unions came under increasing scrutiny as the seventeenth century advanced through church wardens and constables. Verbal marriages or contract marriages were also prevalent and needed two witnesses to oversee the couple's verbal agreement to be man and wife. Many of these unions occurred either amongst the property-less poor or the affluent minority who were indifferent to public opinion. Such contract marriages did not entail any property rights between spouses or their children. However, most of the couples who engaged in such marriages were poor and therefore property implications were not significant. Clandestine marriages increased noticeably during the Interregnum. There had always been a large demand for clandestine marriages particularly on the part of the poor who may not have been able to afford the marriage license. Impoverished or

⁸³ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 147.

⁸⁴ Lawrence Stone, *Uncertain Unions: Marriage in England 1660-1753* (Oxford, 1992), p. 4, 13.

unemployed clergy during the Interregnum often agreed to conduct such marriages in order to procure some money. These marriages came under increasing control from the Restoration onwards until they were deemed illegal by the Hardwick Marriage Act.⁸⁵

Ottoman Empire:-

Law in the Ottoman Empire comprised of four main components; *Sharia*, which was the Islamic law derived from the Qur'an and therefore remained unchanged, *Kanuns* which were the written decrees of the sultans through the ages, *Adet*, which was established custom, most significant largely in remote rural areas which had been governed by these customs for centuries, and *Urf*, which was the will of the sultan then reigning, which, in its written form, could override both previous *Kanuns* and *Adet* if contradictory to them.⁸⁶ It was a combination of the four aspects of law which governed marriage law in the Ottoman Empire.

In the urban areas of the Ottoman Empire a girl was considered of marriageable age when she attained puberty and began veiling especially in the towns and cities. Collecting her trousseaux commenced almost from her birth. As in wealthier families, mothers in the lower classes also exercised control over marriages of their sons.

Daughters had no say in the choice of their marriage partner and had to accept their parents' choice. In some cases, children were betrothed to each other at an early age by parents who wished to create closer bonds between families. In other cases such as among the lower class, the practice of the same trade was the main criterion for the selection of a groom. It should be noted that sons did not have much of a say in the choice of their wives either and almost always saw them for the first time only once they were married. It was only among the poor that some degree of freedom was prevalent where seeing their future partners prior to marriage was concerned. Although mothers had more control over almost all aspects of their daughters' lives,

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 16-17, 18, 38.

⁸⁶ Raphaela Lewis, *Everyday Life in Ottoman Turkey* (London, 1971), p. 27

they retained considerable control over certain areas of their sons' lives as well.⁸⁷

On the whole, Turkish women belonging to the lower class in urban areas lived a much freer life than the royals. They walked with their husbands to the markets or sat on their doorsteps in the evenings. Apart from their household chores, some Istanbul women spent most of their time employed in embroidery.⁸⁸ Some of them took the goods they made at home including food items to sell at weekly markets specifically held for women. Some of them even went from house to house selling their products. In some cases, women acted as administrators for certain businesses or businessmen in the city as a seventeenth-century case of an Istanbul woman being fined for misappropriation of a thousand skins (for which she was a trustee) belonging to Hacı Himmet reveals.⁸⁹

In many villages, not only did the parents exercise their control over the choice of a suitable marriage partner for their children, but very often the village elders and religious heads also had a significant say in the matter of selection. In an environment of relative poverty, where wealth was not likely to be a criterion for marriage, piety tended to be the most sought-after quality in a prospective bridegroom. Where the prospective bride was concerned, it was her virginity which constituted the overriding criterion. In most villages marriage between cousins and more distant members of the family or with people from neighbouring villages was preferred. While in some villages neither boys nor girls were given any freedom in their marriage, in other villages it was possible at times for sons to express their desire to marry a particular girl, although it should be noted that the likelihood of desires of daughters being prevailed upon was rare. In some Ottoman villages, girls once married, took on the role of a kind of apprentice or *gelin* in her in-laws' house for a few years, during which she was trained in work around the house

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-5. A child was taught to respect and obey his parents and elders from a very early stage in life and disobedience was often considered as serious a crime as adultery.

⁸⁸ See the section on embroidery in Chapter 5 for details.

⁸⁹ Philip Mansel, *Constantinople, City of the World's Desire, 1453-1924* (London, 1995), pp. 107-9. Also see Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 88.

before taking on the full responsibility of a wife. The new bride was usually an apprentice for years until perhaps the arrival of the bride of a younger son or possibly until a considerate husband persuaded his parents to release his wife from apprenticeship.⁹⁰ New wives undergoing a period of training echoed, albeit on a smaller scale, the hierarchy that existed in the harems of the royals and aristocrats. Not only did newcomers to the harem have to undergo training (although in this case the training involved different skills to that in the Imperial Harem), but were subject to the authority of their mothers-in-law who headed the household. Wives and mothers enjoyed a vastly differing status in the eyes of their husbands and sons respectively. While a man perceived his wife as primarily a means of procreation, he looked upon his mother with the utmost reverence and obedience.⁹¹

In cases where women contributed to work around the house and on the land, it is likely that their status within the household was more on a par with that of their husbands since their contribution was crucial. They were in charge of the live stock and helping on the land especially during harvest time. Wives of craftsmen also invested time in weaving on looms which were generally located within their homes. Sometimes a husband's long absence from home resulted in women shouldering the entire responsibility of the household.⁹²

Veiling which was common in towns was less important in villages especially before the seventeenth century. A painting titled 'Turkish Woman' by the Venetian painter, Gentile Bellini, who stayed in Istanbul between 1479-81, shows an unveiled woman sitting cross-legged on the floor. She is wearing the traditional Turkish garb⁹³ and we can assume that he probably saw unveiled women in public places which enabled him to sketch their clothes in detail. Women otherwise, especially among the upper classes as noted above, were secluded within their harem walls and if they did go out, they

⁹⁰ Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 68, 69, 71, 80.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 80.

⁹² Suraiya Faruqi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 113 and Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, pp. 49, 54. Men and women were both involved in harvesting and threshing and flocks were tended to by the older girls, since women were responsible for the care of all animals.

⁹³ Michael Jacobs, *The Painted Voyage: Art, Travel and Exploration, 1564-1875* (London, British Museum 1995), p. 32.

followed the strict code of veiling, and men such as Bellini would neither have been allowed near the harems nor been able to see beyond the veil. Later travellers however, report veiling being increasingly implemented and enforced throughout the Ottoman realm.

The picture appears to be fairly similar in England and the Ottoman Empire where marriage and the family as a productive unit were concerned. Although marriages in England appeared to have been based more on personal choice than in the Ottoman Empire, in the latter case too, the likelihood of personal preferences being considered by parents while arranging a match was prevalent. Both situations had common economic factors governing family and marriage relationships and it was perhaps these factors which forced women to make themselves more visible in the public sphere in a more direct manner than their more privileged aristocratic counterparts.

2) WIDOWS, REMARRIAGE AND SINGLE WOMEN:-

England:-

Widowhood could befall a woman at any time after marriage and usually brought with it intense grief largely on account of the life prospects that might lie ahead, either in the form of hardships that a widow might face or prolonged mourning for the loss of a dear spouse. Margaret Cavendish spoke of the grief that her mother endured upon being widowed:

For she never forgot my father so as to marry again. Indeed he remained so lively in her memory, and her grief was so lasting, as she never mentioned his name (though she spoke often of him) but love and grief caused tears to flow and tender sighs to rise, mourning in sad complaints.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Margaret Cavendish, *A True Relation*, p. 376.

Although widows retained the dignity and status that marriage had bestowed upon them, they were open to destitution and suspicion because of the lack of a spouse. Alice Thornton, while grieving the loss of her 'tenderly loving husband' stated in utmost dejection:

Now am I left destituted of head-guide, help or support in this world,
tossed with all the sorrows that a poor, desolate widow can meet
withal.⁹⁵

She, as most women did, considered widowhood to be the third stage of a woman's life, having 'passed through the two stages of my life of my virgin estate, and that of the hon[ou]rable estate of marriage.'⁹⁶ While some widows were overcome with grief as illustrated above, for some other widows the death of a husband could elicit emotions of tremendous relief as the statement of Elizabeth Hatton upon the death of her second husband Sir Edward Coke with whom she shared a difficult relationship betrays – 'we shall never see his like again – praise be to God.'⁹⁷

Petitions could also be made by destitute widows to the church to act on their behalf in an attempt at improving their economic condition. For instance, on the 7th of June, 1564 a petition was sent by Miles Coverdale, late bishop of Exeter, to one Dr. Haddon and Mr. Sackford on behalf of a destitute widow who came weeping to him for assistance; Miles Coverdale wrote a letter to them requesting their charity towards the widow.⁹⁸

Remarriage of widows often occurred on economic grounds if the widow was left with little to support herself or her children because of her age; the

⁹⁵ Charles Jackson (ed.), *The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton*, p. 234.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 234.

⁹⁷ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 175.

⁹⁸ Mary Anne Everett Green (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1601-1603* (London, 1870), p. 548.

younger she was, the higher the likelihood of her remarrying. However, the frequency of widow remarriage declined towards the late seventeenth century for which no particular reason has been observed, especially since the statistics also varied from region to region.⁹⁹ In cases where the first marriage had been an unhappy one, widows must have hoped for a better relationship the second time round. However, in the unfortunate case of Anne Clifford for instance, both her marriages proved to be unhappy.

Poor unmarried mothers and spinsters were not only an economic burden on the Church but more importantly, were perceived as a challenge to the patriarchal system. The Poor Law of 1601 stipulated that it was the church's responsibility to care for destitute women. Such women were often seen as outcasts.¹⁰⁰ The dissolution of the nunneries had denied unmarried women a respected life in the service of God and left them vulnerable in post-Reformation society.

Ottoman Empire:-

Where widows in the Ottoman Empire were concerned, Ottoman law had tax regulations for widows managing their deceased husband's estate. They received a share of the estate with the major share being divided among the children. There are several instances of widows managing estates in the tax registers and in these cases they acted as heads of households. However, if the money was not sufficient to support her family, a widow chose to remarry as quickly as possible in order to support her family or then earn an independent livelihood. However, since the majority of estates and possessions were bequeathed to children, widows who did not remarry were often financially dependent on their children, particularly if the money left to them by their husbands was insufficient for investment or for beginning a small trade or business.¹⁰¹ Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr in her study of women's

⁹⁹ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early modern England*, pp. 182-3.

¹⁰⁰ Diane Willen, 'Women in the public sphere in early modern England: the case of the urban working poor' in Dorothy O. Helly and Susan M. Reverby (eds), *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's history: essays from the Seventh Berkshire Conference on the History of Women* (Ithaca, 1992), p. 185. Also Patricia Crawford, 'From the Woman's View' in *Exploring Women's Past*, p. 61.

¹⁰¹ Suraiya Faruqi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 112.

pleas to the Imperial Council in Istanbul has shown that some of the property cases presented at the Imperial Council were by middle class women who had been deprived of their property or financial rights after their husbands' death by other male relatives.¹⁰²

A number of destitute widows were left to fend for themselves and their families with little means of livelihood in the villages after the *Celali* revolts which first occurred in 1519 and continued sporadically till 1659. These were revolts of disaffected troops and janissaries against the Ottoman Empire because of numerous socio-economic grievances. Women in such situations took on the mantle of their husbands as heads of their families.¹⁰³ Life for a widow with a family to support was difficult as the hard work only increased further. The tasks which had been hitherto performed by her husband would now have to be taken over by her in addition to her already existing duties.¹⁰⁴ Comparatively however, a widow with adult sons may have been at an advantage as it was likely that she was supported by them, although this may not have necessarily been the case. There were occasions in some villages when widows married their husbands' brothers in order to maintain possession of family property.¹⁰⁵ In some other cases, as Goodwin points out, marriages between widows and widowers took place because of the selfish interest of the widower, for his new wife was relegated to the position of a housekeeper.

Amongst the Ottomans it was the duty of the male members of the household to provide for all the female members, be they unmarried or divorced, sisters and aunts or widowed mothers, in all aspects of their lives.¹⁰⁶ Since the prestige of women depended on their marital status, unmarried women were relegated to the position of chattel and were not entitled to the privileges and

¹⁰² Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Women, Law and Imperial Justice in Ottoman Istanbul in the Late Seventeenth Century", in Amira Sombol (ed.), *Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws*, pp. 86-7, 90, 94. Also see Suraiya Faruqi, *Stories of Ottoman Men and Women: Establishing Status, Establishing Control* (Istanbul, 2002), pp. 208-9, 215 for details of some court cases involving women.

¹⁰³ Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, pp. 53-4. These revolts mainly took place in Anatolia in 1519, 1526-8, 1595-1610, 1654-5, 1658-9.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 60-62.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 50-51.

¹⁰⁶ Raphaella Lewis, *Everyday Life*, pp. 90-5.

laws that a married woman enjoyed. Often they also did not have control over or possess any property.¹⁰⁷ Unmarried women in particular therefore, had been and continued to be often at the mercy of their relatives since Islam, like Protestantism, did not allow for a vocation for unmarried women in religious orders.

3) DIVORCE/SEPARATION:-

England:-

As noted earlier, medieval canon law which had been done away with in Catholic Europe by the Council of Trent remained largely unchanged in England. It did not therefore incorporate the new laws on full divorce and remarriage (either on the grounds of female adultery, male cruelty or desertion) that had been implemented in Protestant Europe. It was only in 1857 that a full legalised divorce followed by the option of remarriage was permitted.

Although the ecclesiastical courts had primary jurisdiction over matters of marriage and separation, civil and at times even criminal courts could be involved in suits which involved the dispersion of property or bigamy. The involvement of Parliament in matters of marriage occurred towards the late seventeenth century when it allowed the passing of private bills enabling wealthy peers to obtain full divorces from their wives with the permission to remarry on grounds of adultery. Therefore in England, the main methods of separation or marital break-up were desertion or elopement, wife-sale, separation by private deed or agreement (largely amongst the upper classes), judicial separation from bed and board by the ecclesiastical courts, crim. Con. litigation brought by the husband against his wife's lover in order to extract financial compensation and separation through a parliamentary bill.¹⁰⁸

Women's claims for a separation were often downplayed or trivialised when the case was considered in the courts. Despite the infliction of cruelty they

¹⁰⁷ Philip Mansel, *Constantinople*, p. 231-2.

¹⁰⁸ Lawrence Stone, *Broken Lives: separation and divorce in England, 1660-1857* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 10, 11, 18-25 for details on the different kinds of separation.

were encouraged to remain with their husbands, often on religious grounds. This point is exemplified in Anne Wentworth's case. She believed that it was her religious beliefs that guided and justified her actions. Anne Wentworth's *A Vindication of Anne Wentworth* (1677) was an account of her life following God's call in 1670. After declaring the barbarous behaviour of her husband which she bore for eighteen years, she justified her disobedience to him in the following manner:

having learnt through the mercy of God not to be afraid of him who can only kill the *body*, but can do no more. I do therefore...in the fear of him who can kill both *soul* and *body*, further declare that I was forced to fly to preserve a life more precious than this natural one, and that it was necessary to the peace of my soul to absent myself from my earthly husband in obedience to my Heavenly bridegroom, who called and commanded me, in a way too terrible, too powerful to be denied, to undertake and finish a work which my earthly husband in a most cruel manner hindered me from performing, seizing and running away with my writings. And however man judges me in this action, yet I am satisfied that I have been obedient to the *Heavenly vision*.¹⁰⁹

Wentworth's *Vindication* was evidence that she clearly believed that her duty to God took precedence over her obedience to her husband, thereby involving the need for her to justify her actions, which were contrary to those prescribed by the church courts.

Even in situations where the community backed a woman's claims for a separation, the judicial system was notably lenient. For instance, in cases of claims for separation on the grounds of cruelty, husbands were often let off the hook once they had provided a bond promising good behaviour. In extreme cases situations beyond toleration may have led to self-destruction. One of the 139 suicidal men and women the physician Richard Napier reported between 1597 and 1634 was Katherine Wells who was repeatedly tempted to kill herself on account of her husband's obnoxious treatment of her.¹¹⁰ Alternatively, there are cases of wives murdering their husbands once

¹⁰⁹ Anne Wentworth, *A vindication of Anne Wentworth*, pp. 4-5. Elspeth Graham et al ed. *Her Own Life*, pp. 180, 186-7.

¹¹⁰ Michael MacDonald and Terence Murphy, *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 51, 263.

they had reached the last straw where physical violence was concerned and where there was no avenue for escape, as in the case of a French midwife Mary Hobry in 1688.¹¹¹

Advocates of divorce in the early modern period were rare. Some reformers had campaigned for divorce in specific circumstances, and in the Parliament of 1576 they called for the cases concerning marriage to be transferred from church courts to the civil courts, which implicitly meant the de-emphasis on marriage as a sacrament. The clamour for this change continued and it was converted into an act by the Barebones Parliament in 1653. However, the Anglican Church was rigid on the issue of divorce. Although a legal separation could be obtained, divorce followed by remarriage was not an option.¹¹² Other advocates such as Milton believed that both sexes should have the right to sue for a divorce on the same grounds. However, he also said that the right of men in this sphere was more natural than that of women.¹¹³ Although women were given the right to 'divorce' their husbands (i.e. obtain a legal separation without the option of remarriage) on the grounds of adultery or heresy, Milton appears to have believed that it was women who had the larger share of the defects in their temperaments and nature that generally led to incompatibility in a marriage.

Amongst the lower class and the poor, the church exerted extra effort in attempting to ensure that marriages did not break up, since the maintenance of the separated families could fall upon the parish. The poor usually devised their own, often illegal methods of breaking-up marriages, such as private mutually-agreed separation, desertion or elopement or the occasional case of a wife sale, the last being rare.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, pp. 142, 143, 144-5.

¹¹² *Ibid*, pp. 123-132.

¹¹³ Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*, pp. 120, 137.

¹¹⁴ For details of the custom see Samuel Pyeatt Menefee, *Wives for Sale: An Ethnographic Study of British Popular Divorce* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 1-8.

The middle class was at a clear disadvantage as compared to their upper and lower contemporaries as many of them were not wealthy enough to afford the expense of a full legal separation, and at the same time they were not inconspicuous like the poor, who could get by unnoticed for adopting illegal separation procedures. However, those who could afford it could either sue in the church courts barring their spouse from bed and board.¹¹⁵ Studies of church court records of the early modern period by Paul Hair, Martin Ingram, Anne Tarver, Ralph Houlbrooke and F.G. Emmison have demonstrated several cases initiated by both sexes against their spouses for breaking up a marriage illegally in order to live with another or complaints against bigamous relationships. The records reveal that although many of the cases were initiated by wives against their husbands or betrothed partners, some were complaints by husbands on grounds of desertion or elopement of their wives. Paul Hair's comprehensive study on court records in England, Scotland and New England between 1300 and 1800 reveals that women were consistently plaintiffs in the church courts during our period of study which indicates that not only were women aware of their right to appeal to the church court with their complaints, but also had the precedent of women's grievances being heard and in some cases redressed by the ecclesiastical courts.¹¹⁶

Ottoman Empire:-

Divorce was not an issue among the Ottoman royals. The *haseki* was elevated to the position of the Sultan's consort, and since there was no marriage contract, there could be no divorce. When the Sultan asked the seventeenth-century poet Fenani if there was a pleasure he (i.e. the Sultan) did not possess, the latter's answer was in the affirmative elucidating: 'that of suddenly repudiating four legitimate wives; it is the greatest pleasure in the

¹¹⁵ Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 5, 21, 141, 187. There were a few instances in which the husband had forced his wife out of the house, locked the door after her and gone on to set up house with his mistress. See Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, pp. 141-142.

¹¹⁶ See Paul Hair, *Before the bawdy court: selections from church court and other records relating to the correction of moral offences in England, Scotland and New England, 1300-1800* (London, 1972), Martin Ingram, *Church courts, sex and marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987), F.G. Emmison, *Elizabethan life: morals & the Church Courts: mainly from Essex Archidiaconal records* (Chelmsford, 1973), Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People during the English Reformation: 1520-1570* (Oxford, 1979) and Anne Tarver, *Church court records: an introduction for family and local historians* (Chichester, 1995).

world. It is truly a pleasure of kings.' For a concubine, such an elevation was a marked improvement, not only socially, but also financially and politically as will be discussed later.

As for the rest of the Turkish elite, Bon elaborates as follows:

The parties married, may upon divers occasions specified in their law, leave one another: especially when they cannot agree, and live peaceably together. And if the man puts away the woman, then he is bound to allow her the joynter, which he promised her, when they were contracted before the *Cadee*, and witnesses: but if the woman forsake the man, then she can recover nothing; but departs onely with a small portion, such as she brought with her into her husbands house. And if they have any children, then he must keep the males, and she must take the females along with her.¹¹⁷

Rycaut's narrative adds to our understanding:

The tye and solemnity of Marriage, and the nature thereof amongst the *Turks*, is as before related: from which the Woman hath no ways to unloose her self, whilst the Husband maintains her with Bread, Butter, Rice, Wood, and Flax to spin for her Cloathing; the Law supposes her so industrious a Huswife as with her own labour to supply her self: there are some other points pleadable in Law for Divorce in behalf of the Woman, as impotency or frigidity in the Husband, and the like; but the man hath divers means to acquit himself, and can do it by several allegations; and may upon as easie terms, and on as slight grounds iue out his Divorce, as was permitted to the Jews in cases of dislike, or that she found no favour in his eyes.¹¹⁸

A valid cause for divorce was adultery on the part of either spouse. Rycaut observes the distinction amongst the Turks and Christians in the case of the wife displaying unfaithfulness:

And as in Christendom the Husband bears the disgrace and scandal of his Wives incontinency; here the Horns are by the vulgar

¹¹⁷ Ottaviano Bon, *A Description of the Grand Signor's Seraglio*, pp. 151-2.

¹¹⁸ Paul Rycaut, *Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 156.

adjudged to the Father, Brothers, and Kindred; the Bloud of her Family is tainted and dishonoured, and the Husband obtaining a Divorce, quits himself of his Wife and dishonor together.¹¹⁹

He goes on to describe the three different kinds of divorce that were prevalent among the Turks; the first, a separation, the second, permanent whereby the wife was given her *Mahr* and the third performed 'in a solemn and more serious manner, with more rigorous terms of separation'. In the case of subsequent repentance on the part of the husband in the last instance, Rycout says, the husband would have to witness his wife spending one night with another man as a means of punishment for his actions.¹²⁰ It is interesting to note that from this narrative and the custom itself, the wife is portrayed as a silent participant and there is no indication of her right to refuse.

Lady Montagu in addition noted:

Neither have they much to apprehend from the resentment of their husbands, those ladies that are rich having all their money in their own hands, which they take with them upon a divorce with an addition which he is obliged to give them.¹²¹

This indicates that Turkish women received the inheritance that was due to them as daughters, as well as the *Mahr* or stipulated sum according to their marriage agreements; and this was in keeping with Islamic law. She also noted that once a man divorced his wife, he could not remarry her until she had spent one night with another man.¹²² The observation of the reunion of an ex-husband and wife being made possible only after the wife had engaged in sexual intercourse with another man is interestingly also perceived in Lady Montagu's letters as noted above. According to Islamic law though, it is stated that a man cannot remarry his former wife until she has married and divorced another. There is mention of this custom in seventeenth-century narratives as well which deal with the Turkish religion, for instance those of Aaron Hill and George Sandys. If we are to take their and Lady Montagu's observations at

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 153.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 156.

¹²¹ Malcolm Jack (ed.), *Turkish Embassy Letters*, pp. 71-2. Also see Philip Mansel, *Constantinople*, p. 103.

¹²² Malcolm Jack (ed.), *Turkish Embassy Letters*, p. 100.

face value, then it would appear that this was an Ottoman interpretation or distortion of the Islamic law on divorce and remarriage. Although it is also probable that this custom had been distorted by the foreign observers so as to belittle Turkish tradition and religious beliefs, the fact that a similar mention is made by Lady Montagu whose account is considered as the most accurate, or rather the least inaccurate, the former scenario appears to be more likely.

Although women had the right to seek a divorce, the limitations of women's legal rights are highlighted by Colin Imber. While men could independently repudiate their wives by declaring three times that they had divorced them, women could only seek divorce in three instances and with the intervention of a *Kadi* (*Sharia* judge). The three instances were as follows. If a girl was given in marriage as a child by someone other than her father or paternal grandfather, then she could exercise her right to repudiate her husband upon immediately attaining puberty, thereby making it a very limited right. Secondly, she could exercise the right to divorce in cases where her husband himself had transferred this right to her and the third instance was the case of the *hul* (or *khul*¹²³) divorce in which a wife could initiate a divorce.¹²⁴

In any event, the three-month period of *Idda* (waiting period) immediately following the divorce had to be observed in case the wife was pregnant. If she was with child, it automatically belonged to the husband. However, in general, her control over her *Mahr* was a safeguard against financial destitution, except in cases where the *Mahr* was nominal.¹²⁵ In the case of women initiating a divorce, they had to forfeit their *Mahr* and often had to give a handsome sum of money as compensation to their husbands for the divorce.¹²⁶

The majority of women who initiated divorce belonged to families of modest means like traders or the soldiery for instance. From the available information, while there is no evidence of poor women appealing for a divorce, the number

¹²³ See Chapter 1 for description.

¹²⁴ Colin Imber, 'Women, Marriage, and Property,' in Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire* pp. 82-3.

¹²⁵ Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 77.

¹²⁶ Suraiya Faroqi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 103.

of women who did initiate a divorce amongst the upper classes was greatly limited. In some cases of elite divorce, recording clerks were sent to the plaintiff's home where a court-like hearing occurred. *Hul* divorce was more of an occurrence in the urban areas than in the countryside perhaps because in the urban areas comparatively more women were in a position to afford the cost of initiating a divorce in court.¹²⁷

Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr has shown that women presented petitions at the Imperial Council in Istanbul in matters of divorce and the deprivation of property or *Mahr*. While some women appealed directly to the Council, others presented their case through a male representative or family member and in some cases women even travelled from as far as Cairo to present their suit.¹²⁸ In her study of sixteenth-century Aintab, Leslie Peirce has shown that not only did women use the courts in matters of divorce and property or *Mahr*, but that the practice of divorce laws often followed the normative rules. It was in matters of morality (such as the accepted interaction between the sexes) that the gendered normative law which disadvantaged women was implemented with flexibility in order to counteract the ambiguities in this regard.¹²⁹ Judith Tucker furthermore has shown similar findings through her investigation of the flexible implementation of the gendered normative law in Ottoman Syria and Palestine.¹³⁰

According to the chronicler Şemdanizade, the 'Tulip period' in Ottoman history (1718-1730) had witnessed an age of sexual misconduct on the part of women, resulting in the strengthening of their social position, particularly where the initiation of divorce was concerned. Women therefore he claimed through his patriarchal narrative, cast false aspersions on their husbands in order to obtain divorce from them at the slightest pretext. According to him, 'It

¹²⁷ Madeline C. Zilfi, '“We Don't Get Along”: Women and *Hul* Divorce in the Eighteenth Century' in Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 275, 280, 281, 293, 295, 296. For examples of *Hul* divorce see pp. 276-281.

¹²⁸ Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Women, Law and Imperial Justice in Ottoman Istanbul in the Late Seventeenth Century", in Amira Sombol (ed.), *Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws*, pp. 86-7, 91-2.

¹²⁹ Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (California, 2003), pp. 382-83.

¹³⁰ Judith Tucker, *In the House of the Law: Gender and Islamic Law in Ottoman Syria and Palestine* (California, 2000).

is as though divorce is in their hands', thereby implying a sort of role reversal in which women could divorce their husbands with as much ease as their husbands could divorce them. Madeline Zilfi emphasizes that although the rate of women initiating divorce had visibly increased in the eighteenth century, Şemdanizade's account was exaggerated.¹³¹ Any relaxations of the restrictions on women's movement in the Tulip era for instance occurred presumably with the cooperation of their male relatives. Therefore, these relaxations occurred within limits as their public appearance needed to be sanctioned by family members and for a specific purpose; general regulations on their dress, deportment and chastity were still expected.¹³²

Among the lower class it was easier and therefore common for a man to divorce his wife at any time before marrying another in order to avoid the cost of maintaining two, three or even four separate households which many might not have been able to afford. Consequently, wives had to remain docile and subservient so as not to provoke their husbands into divorcing them. Moreover, any children that might have been born after a divorce automatically belonged to the husband and the wife had no rights over them. A legal separation therefore was a possibility although only in extreme circumstances of personal danger or the inability of the husband to support his wife financially, in which case she was allowed to return to her parents.¹³³ For the poor, initiating divorce in court was a practical impossibility as they did not possess the finances. In some villages divorce was virtually impossible for women, although a man could exercise the right to affect a divorce with greater ease than his wife. Wives could appeal for a divorce only on grounds which placed them under some kind of threat, and even then the ultimate decision depended on whether the village headman or judge perceived the grounds to be worthy of a divorce.

¹³¹ Madeline C. Zilfi, '“We Don't Get Along”: Women and *Hul* Divorce in the Eighteenth Century' in Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire* pp. 275, 280, 281, 293, 295, 296.

¹³² Madeline Zilfi, "Women and Society in the 'Tulip era'", in Amira Sombol (ed.), *Women, the Family and Divorce Laws*, p. 94.

¹³³ Raphaella Lewis, *Everyday Life*, pp. 100-5. See also Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 77.

The nature of marriage laws in England and the Ottoman Empire therefore prohibited divorce to the former and permitted it to the latter irrespective of gender. Not only did women have the right to divorce and remarry thereafter (as opposed to a legal separation without the right to remarry in England), but were also aware of this right, and in some cases made use of it as is evident from the case of Halime in 1702 who claimed that her husband Ahmed had forced her to initiate a divorce in order to deprive her of her *Mahr*.¹³⁴ The downside of a *Hul* divorce however was that women had to forfeit their *Mahr* which was a form of financial security and if the additional security of parental inheritance was also absent, then women might have considered tolerating an unhappy marriage rather than face destitution. There was still a silver lining nevertheless when compared with separated wives in England for the possibility of remarriage was comparatively higher which could lift them out of destitution and restore them to the respected status of a married woman. Among the lower class and the poor however, the situation appears to have been different as initiating a divorce for poor women of the Ottoman realm not only posed financial hurdles, but also involved the approval and support of the village community. In England however, the poor often used illegal means of breaking up marriages, the most common being desertion or elopement of one of the spouses which might even have gone unnoticed unless reported by the deserted spouse in an ecclesiastical court.

Conclusion:-

In light of the lack of female diarists in the Ottoman Empire for the period under study, first-hand information about Englishwomen's married lives lends itself to a more intimate picture of marriage in early modern England at least among the upper and middle classes. The Reformation, which had placed emphasis on the teaching of religious texts by parents to their children, had resulted in basic religious education in many families. Furthermore, the emphasis on individual responsibility for one's own actions had increased the number of diaries written by women who wished to keep a log of their religious activities. The ability to maintain a diary was very likely directly associated

¹³⁴ Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Women, Law and Imperial Justice in Ottoman Istanbul in the Late Seventeenth Century", in Amira Sombol (ed.), *Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws*, p. 92.

with a simultaneous growth in literacy, an aspect which will be treated in further detail in Chapter 5. In the Ottoman Empire however, although we do not have similar evidence of a religious log maintained by women, it does not necessarily reflect on the prevalent literacy levels or education. As noted earlier, neither were there any household manuals such as those found in England. While it appeared that religion, and duties and responsibilities arising from religious doctrine were prominent guiding forces of marriage in England, no such overt prescriptions are visible in the Ottoman Empire, at least in the current research. This is not to say that the roles and responsibilities of Ottoman men and women remained uncoded for not only was the harem network governed by strict hierarchical codes and slave law, but the segregation of the sexes also brought with it a clear understanding of the specific duties and obligations that were assigned to men and women through Qur'anic teachings; and this perhaps explained why a demand for prescribed household manuals may not have existed in the Ottoman Empire as was the case in England. Both societies were patriarchal ones in which, although women occupied a secondary position, the clear assignment of distinct roles and responsibilities to each sex bestowed upon women respectability as a good wife. Within her household, the status of the wife and mother in both societies was high as long as she fulfilled her responsibilities in the prescribed manner without endangering the patriarchal doctrines under which both cultures functioned.

Divorce was not an option in England because of unchanged medieval canon law which prohibited a full divorce with the option of remarriage. However, as has been discussed, all sections of society found several ways to affect a break up of an unsatisfactory union. The ambiguity that shrouded marriage laws and separation in England resulted in some women appealing to the ecclesiastical courts to seek redress in case of unjust treatment on the part of their husbands, as studies of church court records have revealed. These records give us an idea of discord that existed within families and the various and novel ways in which spouses chose to deal with such discord by causing the break up of a marriage in the absence of the option of divorce.

In the Ottoman context, Margaret Meriwether, through her work on elite families in Aleppo from 1770-1840 has shown that family patterns differed in individual situations. While in some cases the normative patterns of a patriarchal family may have reinforced women's subordinate position, in other families women's position may have been enhanced by the roles that they played within it. Moreover, in some cases age rather than gender played a greater role where authority was concerned as older women had control over younger men and women in the household. The court records show that women were not only inheritors but also transmitters of property and wealth, particularly in the cases of widows who may have taken over their husbands' business and used the courts to redress property disputes in relation to marriage and divorce, which was an option for both sexes. However, Meriwether has pointed out the problem of the absence of female voices during her period of study and this was even more acute during the early modern period which emphasizes the feature of changelessness that invariably creeps into the study of Ottoman women before the nineteenth century.¹³⁵ Although it is difficult to draw concrete conclusions in light of this lack of evidence, from the sixteenth-century study of Aintab by Leslie Peirce, the seventeenth-century investigation of merchant families in Cairo and the study of Syria and Palestine by Judith Tucker, we can assume that at least upper and middle class women were aware of their normative legal rights with regard to marriage and divorce and that in cases when these women made use of their rights, the courts responded with flexibility while implementing normative law as each individual situation demanded. Like England, matters of morality were ambiguous issues and it would appear that both the church courts and the *kadi's* courts often tried to implement normative law with the flexibility that individual situations demanded.

In terms of public and private spheres there appears to be a striking similarity in the domestic nature of roles assigned to women within marriage. In England and the Ottoman Empire, women in the upper and middle classes seemed to have been expected to remain in the private sphere of their

¹³⁵ Margaret Meriwether, *The Kin Who Count: Family and Society in Ottoman Aleppo, 1770-1840* (Texas, 1999), 210-12.

household and carry out the duties of a good wife under the patriarchal authority of their husbands. In the Ottoman context, this restrictiveness to the domestic sphere was often accompanied by seclusion. However, they were the mistresses of their households with authority over their children and servants, and in the Ottoman case men had to respect the codes of conduct associated with the segregation of the sexes. In both societies women of the lower class and poor women were visible in a prominent manner in the public life of the community since they often ventured outside their private spheres to earn a living. Therefore it was in these sections of the population that the public and private spheres often merged with regard to the economic and social obligations that the marriage bond imposed. The significance of marriage in the lives of both English and Ottoman women placed upon them the status of respectability which was often denied to unmarried women. Therefore, even though women may have at times felt restricted within their private spheres, they enjoyed high social status as married women.

Briefly then, while evaluating women's status in society, we must also keep in mind, interpretations of scriptural notions of women's position. It was the docility, chastity and submissiveness of women as prescribed by the scriptures in both regions that conferred upon them a greater degree of respectability in the social context. Thus, even though marriage increased a woman's social status, her submissiveness and subordination to her husband earned her greater respectability. This appeared to be more pronounced in the context of upper-class English society than in the Ottoman realm for two main reasons. First, since marriage was not practised amongst the sultans, a concubine's social position was enhanced only if the Sultan chose her as one of his favoured concubines. Second, as we have seen, princesses were not always submissive to their husbands' authority, since they possessed considerable influence with the reigning Sultan, which, at times, acted as a form of check on their husbands' actions and often ensured their husbands' favourable treatment of them. Whatever their influence over their husbands, their position as married women itself conferred upon them the respectability and social status that an unmarried princess would otherwise have not possessed. While widows in both regions under study continued to enjoy a

similar degree of social respectability as when their husbands were alive (in relation to unmarried women), the status of divorced or separated women suffered on account of their single existence outside the marital context.

A similar evaluation of women's role in the public sphere of politics will be our next consideration, which will help us to further our understanding of the ways in which women who were normatively discouraged from participating in public life, made prominent contributions to historical events and developments within our period of investigation.

POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

Having discussed the most significant issues concerning early modern women's lives in England and the Ottoman Empire namely marriage and divorce, the focus now shifts to the field in which women's representation and involvement was also very significant, although male authority which dominated both realms at the time made every effort to keep their participation at a minimum. This section will therefore look at women's visibility in politics, not only as influential consorts and courtiers but also queens regnant and queen mothers. The main points to be considered are the extent to which queens regnant, queen consorts and queen mothers faced opposition to their authority and participation in the political sphere and the manner in which they attempted to overcome opposition and limitations by using their influence to affect policies directly and indirectly and make their mark in the largely male-dominated public sphere. The discussion will begin with queens regnant, followed by queen consorts, mistresses and female courtiers in England. Thereafter, the political participation of women of the middle and lower classes, farming community and peasant women will be observed, largely during the period of the Civil War when women's activism was most evident. However, it should be noted, that in keeping with the emphasis of this study on upper class women, the discussion of the lower classes occurs only in relevance to the discussion at hand. This will be followed by a similar discussion of the Ottoman realm with the Imperial Harem as its focus.

1) England:-

Although it was believed that Henry VIII valued the advice of his first wife, Katherine of Aragon, in political matters, it was Henry's desperation for a male heir that dominated the politics of his reign. All his successive wives recognised the undeniably significant position in which their marriage to the King placed them in, and they not only basked in their authority as queens but also experienced at first-hand the fragility of that same authority which was swept aside before the power of the King which brought about their downfall. Despite their power which emanated from the King, their primary goal was

clear, the bearing of a male heir, the fulfilment of which proved to be crucial to their very existence particularly in the cases of Anne Boleyn and Kathryn Howard.

Henry VIII had used his eldest daughter, Princess Mary, as a pawn for political negotiations through potential marriage alliances. He also made her Princess of Wales in 1525 and she was the first English princess to hold court at Ludlow. However, it was believed that she would be replaced by Henry's male heir in time and that Henry had granted her the position only until his long-awaited son was born. As Robert Tittler has demonstrated, placing Mary at Ludlow separated her from the royal court at a time when relations between her parents were beginning to get strained. By the time their marriage had failed in 1531, Mary was estranged from her father and forbidden any contact with her mother.¹ Like her mother Katherine, Mary also received a humanist education prescribed by the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives, including works by Plato, Sir Thomas More and Erasmus. However, although despite his belief in the education of women, he concurred with the general belief in the inferiority of the female sex. Therefore, Mary was reared with the intent of her some day adopting the position of a royal wife and not as a queen regnant in her own right. This did not however indicate a submissive streak in her character as her stubbornness manifested itself in her prolonged refusal to accept her father's decision to downgrade her title from 'princess' to 'lady'. She finally only conceded defeat and accepted the illegitimacy of her parents' marriage in 1536 after consistent resistance and a series of physical ailments.² It was only in the last years of Henry's reign that he accepted Mary as the second in line to the succession to the throne, after Edward, the son of Henry and his third wife, Jane Seymour, as per his will.³

The death of Henry VIII's only male successor Edward VI forced England to confront the issues that accompanied female rule over the country in the

¹ Robert Tittler, *The Reign of Mary I* (London, 1983), p. 1.

² Ann Weikel, 'Mary I (1516–1558)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18245>, accessed 10 Aug 2007.

³ Robert Tittler, *The Reign of Mary I*, p. 2-3.

person of Mary, Henry's eldest daughter. Where male authority was believed to have been prescribed by as significant a source as divine law, the rule of female monarchs caused much vexation among the opposite sex. Although the accession of women to the throne was not unlawful in England, the prospect of queens regnant brought with it concerns about a suitable marriage partner for the queen and the extent of power wielded by her consort. Questions arose as to whether a female ruler could be the constitutional and religious head in an age when, not only was the inferiority of women to men sanctioned by no less a power than divine law, but also because the Reformation in England had done away with the Pope as the head of Church. In case of marriage, would she, as a wife, automatically be subordinate to her husband while still maintaining her position as the head of state? Political theorists debated about whether the estates of a female monarch reverted to her husband (as was the case with married women in general) if he possessed a royal lineage.⁴ Therefore even female monarchs were, it was argued, not free from some of the legal restrictions to which women in general were subject. The second question of religious supremacy faded in Mary's case since she, as a devout Catholic revoked her father's religious legislation and intended to restore the supremacy of the Pope over the Church in England.⁵

Matrimonial concerns came to the fore with Mary I's coronation and her inclination towards a match with the Catholic King Philip II of Spain sparked serious concerns amongst Protestants who rebelled under the leadership of Sir Thomas Wyatt in the first year of her reign. The following is an excerpt from her speech at Guildhall in response, recorded in John Foxe's *The Actes and Monuments of these latter and perillous dayes*:

I am your Queen, to whom at my coronation, when I was wedded to the realm and laws of the same (the spousal ring whereof I have on my finger, which never hitherto was, not hereafter shall be, left off), you promised your allegiance and obedience to me.... And I say to

⁴ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 350. Mendelson and Crawford suggest that it was this vagary of the rights of female monarchs that had made Henry VIII all the more impatient for a male heir.

⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 349-353.

you, on the word of a Prince, I cannot tell how naturally the mother loveth the child, for I was never the mother of any; but certainly, if a Prince and Governor may as naturally and earnestly love her subjects as the mother doth love the child, then assure yourselves that I, being your lady and mistress, do as earnestly and tenderly love and favour you. And I, thus loving you, cannot but think that ye as heartily and faithfully love me; and then I doubt not but we shall give these rebels a short and speedy overthrow.⁶

She had, in this manner expressed her true devotion to her subjects by utilising the metaphor of one of the closest bonds of humanity (if not the closest) that of mother and child. In this way she appeared to be using her femininity to appeal to the sensibilities of her subjects.

According to Robert Tittler, Mary's contribution should be assessed while keeping the brevity of her reign in mind. In fact, as Ann Weikel suggests, if comparisons are to be made, then Mary's five-year reign should be compared only with Elizabeth's first five years to arrive at a fairer comparison.⁷ Although many of her policies remained incomplete, some of these were inherited, and fulfilled by her successor, Elizabeth, who, it should be noted, is also credited with the social and administrative reforms. Hence, although Mary's reign had left a legacy of serious religious divisions and intolerance, her more positive contributions should not be overlooked.⁸

After Mary's untimely death in 1558, the country welcomed Elizabeth as her successor as opposed to her Catholic cousin, Mary Queen of Scots. Elizabeth's Protestant upbringing had forced the consideration of the issue of supremacy over the Church, an issue which had not needed to be addressed in Mary's reign. In a society which accepted man as superior to women and St. Paul's call for women's silence in Church, the female monarch's position as head of the Church with the hierarchy of clergy below her was a

⁶ John Foxe, *Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes touching matters of the Church, wherein ar comprehended and decribed the great persecutions [and] horrible troubles, that haue bene wrought and practised by the Romishe prelates, speciallye in this realme of England and Scotlande, from the yeare of our Lorde a thousande, vnto the tyme nowe present* (London, 1563), p. 1418.

⁷ Ann Weikel, 'Mary I (1516–1558)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18245>, accessed 10 Aug 2007.

⁸ Robert Tittler, *Reign of Mary I*, pp. 82-3.

contradiction. Therefore, Elizabeth I was designated the title of 'supreme governor' instead of the head of the Anglican Church. Through the Religious Settlement of 1559, Elizabeth sanctioned the establishment of the Church of England which followed a middle path – it was Protestant in doctrine and Catholic in appearance and this compromise, she hoped, would satisfy both sides.

Elizabeth, prior to her ascension to the throne, was taught a wide range of humanistic subjects and along with French, Italian and Spanish, was also fluent in Greek and Latin. She, like her sister Mary, was fortunate in that not only was she brought up in the highly-refined and learned environment of her father's court, but her stepmother, Katherine Parr, whom her father married in 1543, was also well-educated and, like her husband, was particular about further instilling in her stepchildren, both male and female alike, the highest form of education. While Mary had been tutored by Juan Luis Vives, Elizabeth and her brother Edward were taught by eminent Cambridge scholars. She is said to have spent many an evening reading Greek works with her former tutor, Roger Ascham, even after her coronation. Her knowledge of the Continental languages proved crucial to diplomatic endeavours and communication. She was also a patron of literature and not only were various Latin and Greek plays performed at court, but she also was responsible for translating several Latin prose and poetic works during her life. Because of her superior education, it was a highly literate, accomplished and capable sovereign who was presented before her subjects in 1558.⁹

Like her sister before her, she adopted the notion of the monarch's 'two bodies',¹⁰ namely the feminine and masculine sides of her character and further refined its use in her projection as a firm and capable sovereign. As situations demanded she used her feminine and masculine qualities to ensure

⁹ Wallace MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I* (London, 1993), pp. 5-8.

¹⁰ The medieval concept of the monarch's 'two bodies', namely the private and personal nature of the sovereign, in Mary's reign took on the nature of her public role as monarch and private role as a wife. It was during Elizabeth's reign that the concept of the monarch's 'two bodies' began to connote her masculine and feminine sides.

her popularity with her subjects and obtain desired results. This aptly demonstrated her intellectual and political prowess.

The marriage question dominated the concerns of Parliament for almost half of Elizabeth's reign until it was realised that she had crossed child-bearing age. The need to avoid a Catholic successor reversing Elizabeth's religious settlement of 1559 (and surrendering the Church of England once again to the supreme authority of the Pope) became imperative. However, Elizabeth tried to assure her subjects and instil their confidence in her authority through her marriage speech to Parliament in 1559:

Yea, to satisfie you, I have already joyned my self in Marriage to an Husband, namely, the Kingdom of England. And behold (said she which I marvell ye have forgotten,) the Pledge of this my Wedlock and Marriage with my Kingdom. (And therewith she drew the Ring from her Finger, and shewed it, wherewith at her Coronation she had in a set form of words solemnly given her self in Marriage to her Kingdom.) Here having made a pause, And do not (saith she) upbraid me with miserable lack of Children: for every one of you, and as many as are Englishmen, are Children and Kinsmen to me; of whom if God deprive me not, (which God forbid) I cannot without injury be accounted Barren.... And to me it shall be a Full satisfaction, both for the memorial of my Name, and for my Glory also, if when I shall let my last breath, it be ingraven upon my Marble Tomb, "Here lieth Elizabeth, which Reigned a Virgin, and died a Virgin."¹¹

Her speech in many ways was similar to Mary's sentiment of being wedded to the realm with her subjects as her children. It therefore was an example of the emphasis on her femininity as while she addressed the significance of marriage and procreation for women in society she also simultaneously cleverly highlighted her chasteness as a virgin in keeping with Christian virtues of female chastity. As Susan Doran has aptly shown, Elizabeth was aware of public opinion and the pressure on her to marry and produce an heir. Nevertheless, at the same time it was her sensitivity to public opinion which prompted her to terminate the marriage suits over which her Council was divided: and as it turned out, her Council was divided over all the proposals on

¹¹ Frederick Chamberlin, *The Sayings of Queen Elizabeth I* (London, 1923), pp. 6-7, William Camden. *The History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth Late Queen of England*, edited and with an introduction by Wallace T. MacCaffrey (Chicago, 1970), 29-30.

either political or religious grounds or then, their disagreement was propelled by their desire to protect and further their own political ambitions. Susan Doran therefore indicates that if her Council had been unanimous in accepting a particular match for Elizabeth, she would have found it difficult to reject their decision, thereby indicating the importance of the influence of public opinion in general, and the opinion of her Council in particular, over her authority and decision-making.¹²

Elizabeth had also learnt an important lesson from her sister's reign in terms of appointing her successor in advance. She stated to the Scottish Secretary William Maitland in 1563 that to appoint her successor would be,

to require me in my own life to set my winding-sheet before my eye....I know the inconstancy of the people of England, how they ever mislike the present government and has their eyes fixed upon that person that is next to succeed...I have good experience of myself in my sister's time how desirous men were that I should be in place, and earnest to set me up.¹³

She had been a shrewd observer and judge of the political atmosphere in these turbulent times and had the political acumen and foresight to avoid the possibility of her deposition by refusing to select her successor.

The victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588 was another crowning moment for Elizabeth. Her speech to her troops at Tilbury prior to the Spanish invasion in 1588 is an example of her clever emphasis on her 'masculine self', which she accurately sensed as a rallying force and motivation for her troops. She intelligently gauged that the need of the hour required this assertion of masculinity and in a sense she was keeping the image of patriarchal rule alive and well despite her sex. In her famous words:

I am come amongst you, as you see, at this time, not for my recreation and disport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live and die amongst you all; to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and my people, my honour and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble

¹² Susan Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: the Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London, 1996), pp. 210-18.

¹³ Felix Pryor, *Elizabeth I, Her Life in Letters* (The British Library, 2003), p. 43.

woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm; to which rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field.¹⁴

The historian and headmaster of Westminster School, William Camden, praised her dedication to her subjects:

She out of her singular Love to her Country, was all this while so attentive to the Publick good, that in the mean time, she almost quite put out of her mind the Love of potent Princes.¹⁵

Christopher Haigh projects a less magnificent image of Elizabeth however. According to him, the latter years of her reign saw war with her neighbours, poverty and factionalism, and the old image of an authoritative monarch beloved by her subjects had given way to old criticisms, that her gender was responsible for the unsatisfactory state of affairs. For instance, Essex criticised the government's 'delay and inconstancy, which proceeded chiefly from the sex of the queen'.¹⁶ A significant legacy of Elizabeth's reign however, as Judith Richards points out, was that the male rule of her successor was eventually critically assessed on the long reign of a female monarch.¹⁷ It would appear then, that despite her largely successful reign, male insecurities and concerns about a female monarch bubbled under the surface.

Queen Mary II in the latter part of the seventeenth century, in contrast to Elizabeth I, was not only more conscious of her inadequacies as a woman which might render her an incapable monarch, but also became Queen during the recent aftermath of the Civil War which had shattered the concept of the absolute rule of the monarch present in Elizabeth's time. Her deep devotion to

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 98-99.

¹⁵ William Camden, *Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth*, p. 51. Wyman H. Herendeen, 'Camden, William (1551-1623)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4431>, accessed 2 Dec 2006

¹⁶ Christopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I* (London, 1988), p. 172.

¹⁷ Judith M. Richards, 'The English Accession of James VI: 'National' Identity, Gender and the Personal Monarchy of England' in *English Historical Review*, cxvii, 472 (June, 2002), pp. 513-535. For a comprehensive biography of Elizabeth and account of her reign see Patrick Collinson, 'Elizabeth I (1533-1603)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2007 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8636>, accessed 10 Aug 2007

God often resulted in deep gloom as her pessimism did not allow her to hope for the pleasures of Heaven in the afterlife, accepting Hell to be the reality. As Marjorie Bowen suggests, piety and deep involvement in religion was a kind of replacement for the love she longed for from her husband, who was often too preoccupied in other affairs and as a result they spent much time apart.¹⁸ Her letters to William were full of her professions of love and devotion to him as is expressed through the following written by her to William from Whitehall in June 1690 during his Irish campaign:

I long to hear again from you how the air of Ireland agrees with you,
for I must own I am not without my fears for that, loving you so
entirely as I do, and shall till death.

However, it is perhaps likely that such profession of love was an attempt by her to gain the attention of her husband or it was merely a part of her depiction of herself as the pious and devoted wife.

Initially, her time in The Netherlands was spent in needlework, card-playing and religious activities. She despised idleness and being deeply devout, she often had works of devotion read out to her while she was employed in needlework. In fact Bathsua Makin dedicated her work on female education published in 1673 to Princess Mary, whom she considered as foremost amongst all 'Ingenious and Vertuous ladies'.¹⁹ However, Mary's interest in English state of affairs increased considerably after Charles II's death and she even began actively intervening in English affairs as the reality of the prospect of her succeeding to the English throne began to dawn. According to Bishop Gilbert Burnett (who had taken refuge in The Netherlands from James II), Mary 'shewed true judgment, and a good mind, in all the reflections that she made' on English state of affairs. She was however clear that she did not wish to be queen regnant at the expense of her husband's interests. In response to calls for her to accept the Crown as queen regnant, she responded by saying 'that she was the prince's wife, and never meant to be other than in subjection

¹⁸ Marjorie Bowen (pseudo), *The Third Mary Stuart, Mary of York, Orange & England: Being a character study with memoirs and letters of Queen Mary II of England, 1662-1694* (London, 1929), p. 176.

¹⁹ Antonia Fraser, *Weaker Vessel*, p. 321.

to him, and that she did not thank anyone for setting up for her an interest divided from that of her husband'. Although the ensuing rebellion would depose her own father, she reconciled her and her husband's fate as the next rulers of England to providence, convinced 'that God had conducted her by an immediate hand and that she was raised up to preserve that Religion which was then everywhere in its last Agonies'.²⁰

Following the Glorious Revolution in 1688, William and Mary were crowned in Westminster in 1689 as joint sovereigns. William had demanded that he be allowed to rule as King in both their names even if his wife predeceased him. Although in theory he had been given full powers to rule and execute policies in his own right, the Bill of Rights of December 1689 placed unprecedented limitations on the sovereigns' authority, leaving them subject to Parliamentary consent in many issues. William spent long spells in Ireland fighting the Jacobites. Her concern for her husband's safety in his against her father and her fear that her sister was involved in yet another plot against her tormented the Queen immensely. This is evident in her written meditations of 1689 as well as 1690 where she declared that it was 'enough to fright a person hardier than myself'.²¹ Although she saw herself as frail and submissive to her husband, she attempted to gather all her strength from the Lord and during the long intervals when she was forced to take over the administration of the realm in the King's absence, she proved to be a capable monarch who acted in her own name, albeit with her husband's advice. In her words, 'That which makes me in pain is for fear what is done may not please you. I am sure it is my chief desire ... as much as may be to act according to your mind'. Despite her insecurities about her competence to rule, Bishop Burnett praised her capabilities in 1690 by stating that she 'shewed an extraordinary firmness ... her behaviour was in all respects heroical'.²² During his presence in England however, she was content to take a back seat without interfering in most

²⁰ W. A. Speck, 'Mary II (1662–1694)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2007 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18246>, accessed 10 Aug 2007.

²¹ Marjorie Bowen (pseudo), *The Third Mary Stuart*, pp. 150, 164.

²² W. A. Speck, 'Mary II (1662–1694)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2007 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18246>, accessed 10 Aug 2007.

affairs, especially since she believed that ideally 'women should not meddle in government'.²³ One such instance was the question of the Navy in August 1690 when she expressed in a letter to William her reluctance to take any action:

for since you are so near coming, I think it will not be proper to do anything that is not absolutely necessary, and when you do come, you will then be the best judge of the whole matter.²⁴

With reference to her handling of the situation, the approval of her husband brought her the most satisfaction:

Judge then what a joy it was to me to have your approbation of my behaviour, and the kind way you express it in, is the only comfort I can have in your absence: What other people say I ever suspect, but when you tell me I have done well I could be almost vain upon it.²⁵

Mary died prematurely of smallpox in 1694. Not only was hers the largest funeral procession of any monarch, but it was also the first to be accompanied by both Houses of Parliament indicating the respect she had amassed as queen regnant amongst her subjects. Although she was criticised even in death by James II's supporters, the Whig leader, John Somers, proclaimed, 'I believe her the best woman in the world'.²⁶ However, perhaps for Mary, William's praise of her after her death would possibly have pleased her the most:

If I could believe that ever any mortal man could be formed without the contamination of sin, I would believe it of the Queen.

In fact according to the epigram written on 22 February 1695 by the Honourable George Stepney, the English envoy to Dresden, the King

²³ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 362. She did however, take charge of ecclesiastical appointments.

²⁴ Marjorie Bowen (pseudo), *The Third Mary Stuart*, p. 214.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 215.

²⁶ W. A. Speck, 'Mary II (1662–1694)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2007 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18246>, accessed 10 Aug 2007.

appeared to be distraught by his wife's passing: 'So greatly Mary died, and William grieves, you'd think the hero gone, the woman lives.'²⁷

Princess Anne of Denmark succeeded her brother-in-law, William III, in 1702. While recognising the limitations that the Bill of Rights of 1689 had placed upon the sovereign's powers, and the superiority of Parliament, she nevertheless placed great emphasis on the powers of the crown and interpreted these powers as she wished.²⁸ Unlike William III, who was not only a good statesman but also ensured that his ministers were delegated powers in a way which least undermined his authority, Anne relied heavily on the delegation of responsibilities amongst her ministers who were directly involved in Parliamentary and administrative procedure. As any other competent ruler, she constantly demanded to be kept abreast of each development as she mentioned to Robert Harley (her trusted advisor in the latter part of her reign), 'Hide nothing from me, or else how is it possible I can judge of anything?'²⁹ The Spanish war of succession and the union of Scotland and England dominated much of her reign. The Union of Scotland and England came into effect on 1 May 1707 while the Spanish war of succession lingered on until its eventual resolution with the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. Like Mary Tudor and Elizabeth I, Anne had a genuine interest in the well-being of the country as any good monarch should have. She declared to Lord Godolphin (another trusted advisor in the initial years of her reign), 'I...have no interest, no end, no thought, but for the good of my country'.³⁰ Unlike her two sixteenth-century female predecessors, Anne not only had to prove herself as a ruler on account of perceived weakness of her sex, but also had to struggle to learn the art of keeping on top of party politics and Parliamentary factionalism, particularly in light of the two major issues of her reign, in order to portray herself as a firm and dominant monarch in the years following the Bill of Rights, a feat which had been a challenge even for the experienced William

²⁷ Marjorie Bowen (pseudo), *The Third Mary Stuart*, pp. 287, 305.

²⁸ Edward Gregg, 'Anne (1665–1714)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/560>, accessed 10 Aug 2007.

²⁹ Beatrice Curtis Brown (ed.), *The letters and diplomatic instructions of Queen Anne* (London, 1935), p. viii.

³⁰ *Ibid*, pp. vii-viii, 72-6.

III. This coupled with her lack of experience and limited education left her even more disadvantaged, which probably explained her initial dependence on the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough. However, unlike her sister, she was firmly opinionated, a characteristic which in time strained her friendship with Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, who had been used to Anne's acquiescence. She wrote to Sarah Churchill on 17 November 1704 in response to Churchill's letter to her accusing all Tories of having links with the Jacobites:

I ... must own I have the same opinion of Whig & tory, that ever I had, I know both their principles very well, & when I know my self to be in the right, nothing can make me alter mine'.³¹

When Anne's assertiveness on the political front clashed with the Duke of Marlborough's political ambitions, the friendship between Anne and the Duchess suffered irreparably. It would perhaps be inaccurate to state that she was entirely free from influence on account of her independent-mindedness, for her friendship with Churchill was replaced by that with Abigail Masham, whose relatives Anne then brought to power.³² Anne however, displayed qualities of determination and authority. For instance, when Godolphin tried to influence the queen into reconsidering the appointment to the bishopric of Exeter, she responded strongly by stating, 'Whoever of the Whigs thinks I am to be Hector'd or frighted into a Compliance tho I am a woman, are mightily mistaken in me'.³³ She was headstrong enough not to be swayed by any form of influence from male quarters for she recognized her political abilities (despite her being an invalid woman) to be equal to those of men.³⁴

Queen mothers, queen consorts and female courtiers were the next in line to female monarchs where influence in politics was concerned. A significantly influential consort in the seventeenth century was Henrietta Maria who

³¹ Edward Gregg, 'Anne (1665–1714)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/560>, accessed 10 Aug 2007.

³² Beatrice Curtis Brown (ed.), *The letters and diplomatic instructions of Queen Anne*, p. ix, x, 71.

³³ Edward Gregg, 'Anne (1665–1714)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/560>, accessed 10 Aug 2007.

³⁴ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, pp. 360–361, 363.

became paramount in Charles I's affections and whose influence became considerable from 1629 onwards and remained strong throughout the following two decades. Although she has been described as 'frivolous', by Malcolm Smuts, her significance at the outbreak of the Civil War was also alluded to by him. He suggests that she was instrumental in alienating those influential courtiers who may have had the power to reach an agreement with Parliament and thereby prevent the outbreak of a revolution.³⁵ Although the precise extent of Henrietta Maria's influence still requires further research, her influence was undoubted. Women's relationship with the monarch largely determined their influence as well as the presence or absence of any additional sexual rivals, since most monarchs undoubtedly had one or more mistresses.

Queen consorts often used their influence to affect the religious policies of the monarch in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Some examples in the sixteenth century were Katherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn and Katherine Parr who attempted to influence Henry VIII's religious policies, while in the seventeenth century, Henrietta Maria, Catherine of Braganza and Mary of Modena tried to implement their Catholic faith through their husbands' religious policies.

Queens, both consort and regnant, had a vast entourage of ladies in waiting, often closely connected through ties of kinship to the Queen. Elizabeth I's Privy Chamber consisted of a number of attendant women (both paid and unpaid posts) who were responsible for all aspects of her personal care; another section comprised her maids of honour who provided her with companionship and entertainment. Since these women accompanied her in procession, Elizabeth Brown suggests they fulfilled the function of 'guarded access to the body she had situated at the centre of the integrated networks of decision making and representation.'³⁶ Those female courtiers who were

³⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 349-51, 354, 357, 358, 368, Malcolm Smuts, 'The Puritan Followers of Henrietta Maria in the 1630s', *English History Review*, 93 (1978), pp. 26-45 and Elaine Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, p. 261.

³⁶ Elizabeth A. Brown, ' "Companion Me with My Mistress": Cleopatra, Elizabeth I and their Waiting Women' in Susan Frye and Karen Robertson (eds), *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), p. 132.

favourites of queens regnant or queen consorts for instance often managed to exercise significant influence with the latter. Elizabeth I's nurse, Blanche Parry (1508-90) who had been made gentlewoman of the Queen's privy chamber upon her succession was elevated to the post of chief gentlewoman in 1565. She managed to use her influence with the Queen to ensure land grants for some of her relatives. However, although in 1666 John Dudley described her to Leicester as 'our best friend in the privy chamber', John Vaughan, in his book, *Most Approved and Long Experienced Waterworkes* (1610), referred to Parry as one of the 'trinity of Ladies able to work Miracles', who 'in little Lay-matters, would steal opportunity to serve some friends' turns ... because none of these (near and dear ladies) durst intermeddle so far in matters of commonwealth'.³⁷ This possibly might have been a reflection on Elizabeth's resolve to place certain limitations on the extent or spheres of influence that her ladies-in-waiting had access to.

Female courtiers exerted their influence tactfully so as not to attract censure from men. Many women were aware of this criticism and often tried to avoid it by adopting a disparaging tone in their correspondence containing court gossip. An example of a court lady who had amassed considerable influence on account of her genuine interest in politics was Lucy Hay, Countess of Carlisle. Often female courtiers exercised their influence with the aim of furthering their husbands' careers in Parliament and thereby increasing their authority; Sarah Churchill in the late seventeenth century and Elizabeth Isham in 1705 being such examples.³⁸

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, one largely talked about relationship was that of Queen Anne with Sarah Churchill who was greatly influential in the years prior to and during her reign. She not only advised Anne actively on political matters but also ensured the appointment of her husband, the Duke of Marlborough, amongst her closest ministers. When the two friends fell out, the influence of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough

³⁷ Peter R. Roberts, 'Parry, Blanche (c.1508–1590)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/65989>, accessed 13 Aug 2007. Lady Warwick and Lady Scudamore were the other two ladies in the 'trinity' that Vaughan was referring to.

³⁸ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, pp. 365-370, 373, 375-377, 379.

waned as she was replaced by Abigail Masham in not only position but also influence. Although political influence of female courtiers while it lasted was strong, the maintenance of it was a delicate task; and the breaking of just one of the threads in this interwoven mesh of influence affected the wider network of political influence. For instance Sarah Churchill's falling out with Anne resulted in the removal of Churchill and his long-standing influence over Anne and was replaced by that of Abigail Masham, thereby introducing a new network of influence revolving around Masham and her associates.

Although Mary II and Elizabeth II took over the English Crown with all its powers, they appear to have made every effort to prove themselves as capable as their male counterparts to rule a nation. In the patriarchal society of her time, Elizabeth skilfully used her feminine and masculine attributes as individual situations demanded to assert her power and gain the respect that a ruler demanded irrespective of her sex. However, she also had to battle with the ever-present male concerns about female rule and be sensitive to the advice and opinion of her Council where delicate matters such as marriage and succession were concerned; matters which patrilineal succession might otherwise have not been raised. The two sister queens regnant of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries worked under the limitations that the Bill of Rights placed them under and had to ensure the effectiveness of maintaining their dominance in the realm as skilfully as their male counterpart, in both cases, the reference point being William III. While Mary II preferred to take a back seat in favour of her husband, she held her own (as well as the love of her subjects) during her husband's frequent absences. Although Anne reigned as the monarch in her time without her husband holding joint powers like William III, she initially struggled with the precise extent of her powers and needed to rely on her trusted advisors and ministers to whom she had delegated powers. Unlike Elizabeth's superior education which held her in good stead throughout her reign, Anne's lack of it proved to be limiting. Despite this, she managed to get through her reign with success. All four monarchs however managed to leave a significant mark on the historical fabric, be it in terms of religion, politics or economy.

Mistresses of monarchs also possessed the potential to wield their influence in politics while utilizing their sexuality to its fullest. This was most visible during Charles II's reign. Barbara Palmer, later the Duchess of Cleveland, was Charles II's first fancy, while in 1671, Louise de Qu  rouaille, later Duchess of Portsmouth, took over from Cleveland. Her hold on the King remained firm despite a decline in their sexual relationship by 1676. Apart from these two eminent mistresses, Charles II had several others and in all they produced fourteen 'natural' children who were acknowledged by their father and granted titles and pensions. The mistresses of Charles II, Cleveland and Portsmouth in particular, were granted large allowances which permitted them luxuries at times even beyond those enjoyed by the King and Queen. Courtiers seeking favour with the King used his mistresses as their best avenue of influence. Portsmouth also acted as an intermediary between Louis XIV and Charles and helped to balance relations between England and France. She was also believed to have intervened against Parliament which was furious with the influence she wielded over the King. The activities of the King had a direct impact on his courtiers whose sexual relationships were also complex. As Spurr points out, even the art and literature of the time mirrored the freer sexual atmosphere of the time. Satires outlining the King's debauchery and the consequent need to restore order in the realm by de-focusing on the women in his court abounded. Furthermore, the familiarity of the practice of Kings and Princes acquiring mistresses at court during Charles II's reign was also mirrored in his niece, Mary's teenage correspondence with her friend, Frances Apsley.³⁹

The more covert influence of women in courtly circles was great – they not only recognized the potential of their influence, but also discovered effective means to utilize it to its fullest, within the restrictions imposed upon them by virtue of their existence as women. Therefore, women often intelligently

³⁹ John Spurr, *England in the 1670s: this masquerading age* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 195-7, 198, 204-5, 209, 212. Also see Patricia Crawford, 'From the Woman's View' in *Exploring Women's Past*, p. 79 and W. A. Speck, 'Mary II (1662–1694)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2007 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18246>, accessed 10 Aug 2007.

worked within the boundaries they were placed in to extract the maximum from their positions and influence.

Thus far the focus has been on the royal and aristocratic circles in England. In order to observe the manner in which women from the middle and lower classes including the farming communities made a mark on the political arena, we must turn our attention to the period of the Civil War when women's activism was most evident. Pre-Civil War works like *The Women's Sharpe Revenge* (1640) which voiced sentiments such as, 'If we (women) be weak by our nature, they (men) strive to make us more weak by our nurture, and if in degree of place low, they strive by their policy to keep us more under', swelled as political tensions heightened over the ensuing years. Women also asked for equal rights with their husbands where property was concerned on the basis that both men and women were viewed equal in the eyes of God.⁴⁰

Although women's visibility in the public political sphere came into the limelight primarily during the Civil War years, some women were aware of political and economic matters to a large degree prior to its commencement. As Mendelson and Crawford suggest, some literate and middle class women had their own networks through which they kept abreast of political affairs. These networks generally lay within their respective social groups and gender. Women from the lower class, who were more visible in public life, acquired news on political affairs in the markets or in church.⁴¹

During the upheaval of the Civil War years, some women jumped wholeheartedly on the bandwagon of protest so as to express their grievances. The Protestation Oath of 1641 and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 in many parts of the country included women as oath-takers along with their men folk. Women's membership varied from total exclusion in some areas to full inclusion in others depending on their royalist or parliamentary leanings; whereas still others only permitted certain sections

⁴⁰ Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (ed.), *Women, Texts & Histories*, p. 177.

⁴¹ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, pp. 383, 385, 386.

of the female population (such as widows) to take the oath.⁴² It should be noted that this period also witnessed an increase in female authorship. Women voiced their opinions on the Civil War either as royalists or as supporters of the parliamentarians.⁴³ This was perhaps indicative of not only an increase in female literacy levels as the seventeenth century advanced but also of women's interest and concern about political events and issues despite their exclusion from it. Many women left first-hand accounts of their experiences during the Civil War years either as royalists or parliamentarians and have left some detailed accounts of the hardships they faced under siege, as controllers of their husbands' estates or businesses in their absence, and as distraught widows or separated wives. Some of these women were for instance, the parliamentarians, Elizabeth Feilding, countess of Denbigh (1622-70), Lady Brilliana Harley (bap. 1598 d. 1643) and Lady Isabella Twysden (1605-57), and the royalists, Alice Thornton (1626-1707), Susan Feilding, countess of Denbigh (d. c.1655) and Lady Ann Fanshawe (1625-80), to name but a few. While the works of John Adair, Martyn Bennett, Charles Carlton and Christopher Hill detail eyewitness accounts of the Civil War years and the turmoil of the period, those by Diane Purkiss and Patricia Crawford investigate the Civil War with special emphasis on women and literature and their active participation in radical religious sects.⁴⁴ In fact, as Patricia Crawford has shown, women's involvement in public religious activities during the 1640s and 1650s was unparalleled at any other time during the early modern period. They experienced religious freedom and expressed their opinions as members of radical sects not only during the Civil War and Interregnum years but also during the comparative conservatism of the Restoration years: Quaker women being a prime example. As Crawford suggests, since women

⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 395, 398. In the elections of 1640 some women even attempted to vote and clamoured for suffrage. However, it should be noted that most of the women involved in this endeavour belonged to the landed classes, p. 396.

⁴³ Some of these works will be briefly discussed in Chapter 5 in greater detail.

⁴⁴ John Adair, *By the sword divided: eyewitness accounts of the English Civil War* (London, 1983), Martyn Bennett, *The Civil Wars experienced: Britain and Ireland, 1638-1661* (London, 2000), Charles Carlton, *Going to the wars: the experience of the British Civil Wars 1638-1651* (London, 1992), Christopher Hill, *The world turned upside down: radical ideas during the English revolution* (London, 1972), Diane Purkiss, *Literature, gender and politics during the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 2005) and Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England, 1500-1720* (London, 1993).

in general were disadvantaged in the public sphere and in law, they had little to lose as dissenting women when compared with their male counterparts.

The period of the Civil War saw an unprecedented growth of women's activity in petitioning to Parliament on economic and political grounds. Since economic considerations were the main driving force behind such protests, it was led by the people who bore the brunt of economic fluctuations, reforms and poor harvest the sharpest, namely, artisans, shopkeepers, labourers and other working women. Significant protests were made in the House of Lords and Commons in the years 1642, 1643, culminating in 1649, when women in the thousands (as compared to only 400 in 1642) aggressively and vociferously put forth their claims before Parliament. In fact, as Diane Purkiss and Patricia Higgins have shown, women's petitioning in Parliament had also given rise to 'The Parliament of Ladies' genre of pamphleteering (often satirical), which often highlighted the disadvantages of women participating in the public sphere and at times even equating such public women to whores.⁴⁵ The reality was that women's newly-cultivated radical religious beliefs encouraged them to question their disadvantaged position in secular matters as well. There had been a transformation in their manner of petitioning, for in 1642 they were aware of their actions appearing as 'strange and unbecoming our sex', but reiterated that they were not 'seeking to equal ourselves with men, either in authority or wisdom', but were 'following the example of the men which have gone...before us'. In 1649 though, they declared, 'we are no whit satisfied with the answers you gave unto our husbands', and demanded a share along with the men in not only the 'ordering' of the Church, but also in the 'Commonwealth' and suffrage rights. The basis of their argument was that,

since we are assured of our creation in the image of God, and of an interest in Christ equal unto men, as also of a proportional share in the freedoms of this Commonwealth, we cannot but wonder and grieve that we should appear so despicable in your eyes, as to be

⁴⁵ Diane Purkiss, *Literature, Gender and Politics during the English Civil War*, pp. 65-6.

thought unworthy to petition or represent our grievances to this honorable House.⁴⁶

Therefore, women's participation in the radical sects afforded women from all social levels a new and freer religious experience, which in turn challenged conventional gender roles and the dichotomy of the public and private spheres.⁴⁷

Petitions on economic grounds, made by some women to the King directly were commonplace after the Restoration. For instance, in 1662, Anne and Elizabeth Alexander, daughters of the late Robert Alexander petitioned for a grant of livelihood. Their father had served the late King at Oxford with 'plate and money' and sheep for his army. As a result he lost his places and estates worth 400/ a year.⁴⁸

However, this spurt of female activity had a limited legacy, for with the Restoration was also restored the earlier system of male authority. The Civil War period had disrupted much of the existing patterns of social order and such activities by women possibly formed a part of this disruption. Many of the radical sects, which women had been a part of, such as the Diggers, Ranters and Levellers, also faded in significance and the Quakers began leaning towards the traditional protestant practices.⁴⁹ It should nevertheless be noted that its effects probably lingered in the subconscious of both women as well as men as a potential threatening force which the former could employ against the latter.⁵⁰

2) Ottoman Empire:-

2.a) The role of the *valide sultans* and *hasekis* during the rule of the harem:-

⁴⁶ *To the Supreme Authority*, (5 May 1649).

⁴⁷ Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion*, pp. 209-11.

⁴⁸ Mary Anne Everett Green (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Charles II, 1661-1662* (London, 1861), p. 42, 619.

⁴⁹ Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, p. 306.

⁵⁰ Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities, English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 337-40.

Even though records trace the emergence of Ottoman women in the political limelight from the Süleymanic period (1520-1566) onwards, there is evidence of women commanding significant importance and status even before. The tradition of, as Peirce puts it, *valides* acting as guardians and mentors of their sons was evident from the beginnings of the Ottoman Empire under Osman I (1290-1324). Also for instance, according to the North African traveller, Ibn Batuta who passed through the Ottoman city of Iznik, Nilüfer, the wife of Orhan (1324-62 - son of Osman I), was in charge of the city and the soldiers stationed there while the sultan was away.⁵¹ To what extent such evidence can be relied upon is debatable. What is undoubted is that the simultaneous existence of wives and concubines in the initial phase of the Ottoman Empire meant that the 'politics of reproduction' (as referred to in Chapter 3) according to Peirce played a central role. These politics however, gained momentum only during Süleyman I's reign, soon resulting in the amalgam of harem and Imperial politics. The following overview will delve into the lives and intrigues of the women involved and their impact on the political fabric.

Until the death of his mother Hafise (or Hafsa) Sultan in 1534, Süleyman (1520-1566) not only assigned her the highest degree of respect by virtue of her position as his mother and *valide*, but he was also under her considerable influence. Her revered status was apparent from the lofty praise given at her funeral by Celalzade Mustafa, the royal chancellor:

(S)he was a woman of great ascetism and a lady of righteous thought, queen of the realm of chastity and the Khadija of the capital of purity, builder of charitable foundations and doer of pious deeds, the Fatima of the era and the A'isha of the age.

This was high praise indeed and evidence of the extent of the influence such a highly revered lady could wield over her son.

The influential role played by Hafise Sultan was thereafter taken over by Süleyman's *haseki*, Roxelana or Hurrem Sultan (d. 1558), who had captivated him almost as soon as she had made her debut as a slave concubine. Russo-

⁵¹ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 35, 237 and Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 121.

Polish by birth, Hurrem was probably born Alexandra Lisowska, daughter of an Orthodox priest of Ukrainian descent, living in the region of Lvov in Poland. She had been taken prisoner and brought to the Imperial Harem. She had received her training in the harem school and had acquired competency in reading and writing along with all the other usual artistic skills taught to slave girls.⁵²

Thus trained and equipped with the necessary skills of a prospective concubine, Hurrem proceeded to successfully capture Süleyman's attention and shrewdly took full advantage of his affection for her. The three main obstacles in her path to complete influence over Süleyman were the *baş haseki*, Mahidevran, also referred to as Gülfem or Bosphor Sultan, the mother of Süleyman's eldest son and successor, Mustafa, Süleyman's mother, Hafise Sultan and the Grand Vizier and close friend of Süleyman, Ibrahim Paşa. Natural death took care of Hafise Sultan, while Hurrem is said to have cunningly taken care of the others by poisoning Süleyman's ears, mind and heart against both Mahidevran and the Grand Vizier. As for the Grand Vizier, Ibrahim Paşa, the Sultan had shared a very close friendship with him, raising him from the status of a slave to the lofty office of Grand Vizier. The extent to which Hurrem was responsible for his actual removal is doubtful since Ibrahim Paşa himself had also provided the Sultan with reason to disfavour him. However, it is also clear that Süleyman was under her spell. The Italian traveller to the Ottoman court, Luigi Bossano, for instance in 1545 said of her power over Süleyman:

He bears her such love and keeps such faith to her that all of his subjects marvel and says that she has bewitched him, and they call her the *ziadi* (*jadi*), or the witch. On this account the army and the court take her and her children, but because he loves her, no one dares to protest: For myself I have always heard everyone speak ill of her and of her children, and well of the first-born and his mother.⁵³

Richard Knolles in his *General Historie of the Turks* (1603) openly expressed his disapproval of her through the following words:-

⁵² Philip Mansel, *Constantinople*, p. 83.

⁵³ Barnette Miller, *Beyond the Sublime Porte*, pp. 86, 87, 88-9.

To fairest lookes trust not too farre, nor yet to beautie braue:
For hatefull thoughts so finely maskt, their deadly poisons
haue.
Loues charmed cups, the subtile dame doth to her husband fill:
And causeth him with cruell hand, his childrens bloud to spill.⁵⁴

He went on to condemn her overtly pious intentions of building a mosque cum hospital as:

those meritorious works by her before intended as if she had
thought of nothing but Heaven, whereas indeed her thoughts were
in the depth of Hell.⁵⁵

He thereby explicitly highlighted what he saw as her underlying devious intentions in even her superficial pious acts.

Circumstances were in Hurrem's favour – a fire in the Old Palace of Mehmet II, which had hitherto been the primary residence of the royal harem, provided Hurrem with the golden opportunity to move, baggage and entourage in tow, to Topkapı Saray, the seat of the Sultan himself, thereby giving her the advantage of proximity where the exercise of political influence was concerned. The precise date of the move into the Sultan's palace is not clear; but it is said to be sometime between 1541 and 1545.⁵⁶ Hurrem moved craftily thereafter, denying Süleyman an audience until and unless he agreed to marry her. So great was Süleyman's love for her that he broke with Ottoman tradition of not engaging in marriage and complied with her demand.⁵⁷

With Mahidevran and Mustafa away in distant parts of the Empire and with her newly acquired legal status, the prospect of the succession of her sons as opposed to Mustafa became a real one. Furthermore, the dismissal of Ibrahim Paşa and the appointment of her son-in-law, Rüstem Paşa, as Grand Vizier provided both her and her daughter Mihrimah with the perfect avenue to carry forward their political ambitions. According to Barnette Miller, there ensued a

⁵⁴ Richard Knolles, *The generall historie of the Turkes*, pp. 757, 759

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 758.

⁵⁶ Barnette Miller, *Beyond the Sublime Porte*, p. 90 and Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 121.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 91, 93. Also see Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 127.

struggle between the harem and the Grand Vizierate for supreme power, in which the former was clearly victorious for the ensuing century and a half. This phase is viewed by Ottoman contemporaries as the *Kadınlar Saltanatı* (the rule of women) and resentment towards the royal harem gained momentum largely because of their ever-increasing authority.⁵⁸

Thereafter Hurrem and Mihrimah and her husband the Grand Vizier Rüstem Paşa succeeded in convincing Süleyman that his first-born son Mustafa was plotting a rebellion to overthrow him. Their plot eventually succeeded, resulting in the murder of Mustafa, Süleyman's heir and the favourite of the populace. The furore thereafter resulted in Rüstem Paşa's dismissal – his death was averted only on account of Mihrimah's plea to Süleyman. A succession struggle ensued between Hurrem's two surviving sons, Bayezid and Selim, ending only when the former died in 1561. The extent of the involvement of the two royal women in not only the politics, but also in the future of the Ottoman Empire as a whole, is evident. If the capable Mustafa had survived his father, it is possible that the potential authority exercised by *hasekis* and *valide sultans* may thereafter have been limited. In many European and Ottoman accounts Hurrem and Mihrimah are depicted as villainous. For instance Mustafa Ali, the best-known sixteenth-century historian of the Ottoman Empire, attributed the death of Prince Mustafa to 'the plotting of women and the deceit of the dishonest son-in-law.' Although not explicitly named, his reference to the scheming coalition of Hurrem, Mihrimah and Rüstem Paşa was clear.⁵⁹

As Rogers and Ward have suggested, Hurrem's activities were perhaps not that far-removed from those of her European contemporaries and, although not creditable, her behaviour was not unique.⁶⁰ Although generally unpopular

⁵⁸ J.M Rogers and R.M. Ward, *Süleyman the Magnificent* (London, 1988), p. 16.

⁵⁹ For a detailed account of Mustafa's death and Hurrem's hand in it, see Richard Knolles, *The generall historie of the Turkes*, pp.757-763. Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 84 and Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600)* (New Jersey, 1986), 258-9. The wrongful execution of Mustafa was lamented vastly and through elegies, two of which were written by a female poet named Nisai. Rogers and Ward, *Süleyman The Magnificent*, pp. 21.

⁶⁰ Barnette Miller, *Beyond the Sublime Porte*, p. 89 and Rogers and Ward, *Süleyman The Magnificent*, pp. 16, 21-2.

with the Ottoman populace, Galina Yermolenko believes that Roxelana presented herself as an impressive public figure. In her article *Roxelana: "The Greatest Empresse of the East"*, Yermolenko cites the positive image drawn by the Ottoman historian Taliki-zade el-Fenari in his works *Şehname-i Al-i Osman* (1593) and *Şehname-i Humayun* (1596) in which he praises Hurrem for 'her numerous charitable endowments (the same activity that Knolles had so strongly criticised), her patronage of learning and respect for men of religion, and her acquisition of rare and beautiful objects.' Therefore, the same deeds of Hurrem were both criticised and praised according to the individual author's perception and context within which he was writing. For most contemporary historians, however, both European and Ottoman, her intervention in the politics of the Empire had appeared to have negatively coloured their overall opinion of her. Hurrem's negative image is challenged by Yermolenko in the course of her article which endeavours to prove her intelligence and the premise that Hurrem was acting purely through an instinct of self-preservation in the highly charged harem atmosphere of factionalism and rivalry in an attempt to ensure not only the consolidation of her own vast influence on Süleyman, but also to ensure that it was one of her sons that succeeded his father; she was ensuring the continuation of her power and possible influence in state affairs as the mother of the sultan. As Yermolenko notes, apart from the immense favour she enjoyed with Süleyman, it was largely her intelligence and political acumen which helped her to the heights of power and influence she eventually attained.⁶¹

One can only attempt to imagine the triumph Hurrem must have felt as she reached the peak of her influence; her fall may have seemed inevitable. However, in Hurrem's case, fortune was on her side to such an extent that she was spared from the immediate repercussion and disastrous effects of her actions because of her favour with Süleyman. Thus at the end of the day, despite all her apparent misdeeds, Hurrem lost little apart from her reputation. It was Rüstem Paşa and, ironically, Süleyman himself who were the biggest

⁶¹ Galina Yermolenko, 'Roxelana: "The Greatest Empresse of the East"', from *The Muslim World*, Volume 95, issue 2 (April, 2005), pp. 236, 238.

losers in her political game, the former losing his position and the latter losing his dearly beloved son.

A seventeenth-century play by the English author, Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery, *The Tragedy of Mustapha, the son of Solymán the Magnificent* (1668) relates in detail the plotting and execution of the plan leading to Mustafa's murder on the order of Süleyman. Roxelana is claimed to be most merciful and just at the outset of the play.⁶² As the play progresses, her compassion towards the infant King of Hungary and his mother is evident while simultaneously she secretly agrees to be a furtive accomplice of the plot to kill Mustafa. Although she is shown pretending to be Mustafa's advocate in Süleyman's presence, the truth of the plot dawns on Süleyman all too late, and she is betrayed by Rüstem Paşa prior to being slain by Süleyman. Prepared to die after she realises the folly of her deeds, she has only this to say in her defence to Süleyman:

I have but little through ambition done;
Nature did more, and 'twas to save my Son.⁶³

It is interesting to observe a perception of Roxelana a century later by an English playwright which is not entirely villainous and shows her human side providing plausible justification for her actions.

The illustrious Nurbanu Sultan (1525-1583) stepped into Hurrem's shoes following her death in 1558. Nurbanu was captured at the age of twelve in

⁶² The Queen of Hungary (who had just lost her kingdom on account of Süleyman's conquest of it) decides to send an embassy with Thuricus (one of the Hungarian Lords) along with the Crown Jewels and her infant son so as to appeal to the reputed mercy of Roxelana as the following lines reveal:

'You *Thuricus* on Embassy shall go
To *Roxelana's* Tent, and let her know
How much the common voice of Fame I trust,
Which renders her compassionate and just;
Whilst others say she all her sex exceeds,
They shew their Faith by words, but I by deeds;
I by so strange a trust may find relief,
If she has vertue equal to my grief.' Another Lord upon hearing this reassuringly says -
'Madam, she will not now by one mean act,
A future stain on her past fame contract.'

See Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery, *The Tragedy of Mustapha, the Son of Solymán the Magnificent* (London, 1668), p. 58.

⁶³ Roger Boyle, *The tragedy of Mustapha*, p. 122.

1537 by Hayrettin Barbarosa Paşa on the way from Corfu to Istanbul. She was the illegitimate daughter of the distinguished Venetian house of Vernier-Baffo. Her Turkish name meant Princess of Light. She was presented to Selim II (1566-1583) by Süleyman in 1542 and accompanied him to Konya in 1543 where he was stationed as governor. She gave birth to their son, Murad III, in 1546.⁶⁴ Upon Selim's accession to the throne in 1566, Nurbanu entered Istanbul as the head of the Imperial Harem. Her importance was gauged by foreign emissaries such as Jacopo Soranzo who declared that:

The *Chassechi* (*haseki*)...is said to be extremely well loved and honoured by His Majesty both for her great beauty and for being unusually intelligent.

Although, unlike Hurrem, Nurbanu was not Selim's only concubine and consort, she maintained a prominent position in his eyes. According to the ambassador Jacopo Ragazzoni in 1571, Selim made Nurbanu his legal wife because of his respect for Murad, his son. Nurbanu, after the death of Selim II, as *valide sultan* wielded an even greater influence over her son, Murad III, until her death in 1583 and the Sultan depended heavily on his mother's advice in political matters. Nurbanu was the first *haseki* to adopt the most revered role of *valide sultan* in the Imperial Harem at Topkapı. Immediately prior to her death, Paolo Contarini, in his report to the Venetian government in December 1583, wrote about the extent to which Murad III relied on his mother's advice in political affairs:

(He bases) his policies principally on the advice of his mother; it appearing to him that he could have no other advice as loving and loyal as hers, hence the reverence which he shows towards her and the esteem that he bears for her unusual qualities and many virtues.

The last words of advice that Nurbanu gave her son were, according to ambassador Morosini:

⁶⁴ For evidence of the marriage in Ragazzoni's account see Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 94.

the most judicious and prudent caution as regards this government that could have come from a good, intelligent, and consummate statesman.⁶⁵

Her political acumen and intelligence were recognised and respected by comparing her in masculine terms to a statesman.

This role was adopted by Nurbanu's successor, Safiye (1550-1603), and Murad III (1583-1595) was devoted to her from when she was thirteen. The Venetian bailo (the representative of the Venetian Republic at Istanbul) Morosini described Safiye as witty and quick-tongued, but haughty and possessing all the bad characteristics of the native Albanians which she may or may not have been. Twelve years later he found that she had become prudent, patient and wise. She was powerful enough to be regent when Murad III was away on campaign. In 1590 Giovanni Moro wrote about Safiye's authority over the sultan:

with the authority she enjoys as mother of the prince, she intervenes on occasion in affairs of state, although she is much respected in this, and listened to by His Majesty, who considers her sensible and wise.

This sentiment was echoed by John Sanderson, an English merchant travelling to the Levant between the years 1584-1602. In his autobiography which included an account of his travel experiences, he mentions (in correspondence with Secretary Robert Cecil on the 28th of August, 1596), the then Valide Sultan, Safiye, who hearing of the Sultan's military success in Transylvania, released most of the prisoners in Istanbul and Galata (except those who had committed heinous crimes) and was also said to have caused the beheading of the eunuch Hassan Bassa (who governed Istanbul in the Sultan's absence) for indiscriminately ordering the death of adulterous women. John Sanderson reports an incident where Nurbanu and Safiye noticed boats of wailing women as they walked in the garden. Upon inquiry they learnt that they were prostitutes ordered to be drowned by the chief black eunuch. Nurbanu instantly ordered him to stop under threat of informing the

⁶⁵ Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 128 and Barnette Miller, *Beyond the Sublime Porte*, p. 96 and Leslie Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 92-3, 238.

Sultan and having him executed.⁶⁶ This, along with Sanderson's use of words – for he refers to her throughout as 'the Great Sultana'- clearly indicate the active role of the Sultana, as mother of the Sultan, in government. In spite of the complaints of the *Spahis* (Janissaries) against her, her power appears to have reigned triumphant. It was during her 'rule' that the power and influence of the harem reached its peak where political authority and influence were concerned and maintained it for almost the next century.⁶⁷

Safiye's influence however did not go unchallenged. Sanderson, on 30 March, 1600, recorded the unrest amongst the *Spahis* about the widespread influence of the harem in governing of the state. Their protest was so strong that Sultan Mehmed III (1595-1603) tried to appease them by assuring them that he would speak to his mother about it. The protest was not to be taken lightly as the *Spahis* had already murdered the Sultana's Jewish agent, the *Kira Esperansa Malchi*, and two of her sons (who were the Customs Officers of Istanbul) who together had been responsible for receiving bribes on behalf of the Sultana and in the bargain had amassed vast personal fortune for themselves.⁶⁸

In his *The Seasons of Sovereignty on the Principles of Critical Expenditure* (dated 1598-99) Mustafa Ali mirrored the authority that Safiye held at the time:

The Year 1007 has begun and order has disappeared from the earth. Rulers no longer rule, nor do they value things at their real worth. The upright are dismissed and only sly sharpers have come to prominence.... Though the sultan does not condone oppression, his vezirs...bring unworthy ones into service and destroy the order of the world by bribe-taking. They do not tell the sultan the truth, excusing themselves by saying they cannot tell him such things out of fear. However, they contradict themselves. Do they imagine it will be easier for them if, fearing his anger, they tell the *valide*

⁶⁶ Foster, Sir William (ed.), *The travels of John Sanderson in the Levant, 1584-1602* (Nendeln, 1967), pp. 156, 87. Also see John Freely, *Inside the Seraglio: Private Lives of the Sultans in Istanbul* (London, 2000), p. 86.

⁶⁷ Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 138 and Barnette Miller, *Beyond the Sublime Porte*, p. 96. Also, Leslie Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 94.

⁶⁸ Foster, Sir William (ed.), *The travels of John Sanderson in the Levant, 1584-1602*, pp. 201, 86. The punishment for adulterous women (like those practising witchcraft, according to Bon) was to put them in a sack and drown them.

sultan? She would never allow such disruption of order, or such affairs to besmirch the reputation of her dear son.⁶⁹

Murad III, unlike his predecessors, also insisted on approving every appointment, which had hitherto been the work of the grand vizier. This shift proved to be positive for the harem, both eunuchs and concubines who used their influence with the sultan to appoint their favoured people, thereby increasing their respective support networks, even beyond harem boundaries.⁷⁰

Safiye was succeeded by Handan (mother of Ahmet I, d. 1605) as the next *valide*. She died a violent death in 1605, eighteen months after Ahmet I's accession in 1603. Her son, who disliked her, was accused of poisoning her, but it was more likely that she was poisoned because of harem intrigue.⁷¹ It was during Ahmet I's reign (1603-1617) that the influence of the harem was curtailed by the Sultan. However, the weakened but not defeated power of harem women rose once again after Ahmet I's death under the *valide* sultanship of Kösem (fl. 1623-1651), the mother of Murad IV (1623-1640) and Ibrahim I (1640-1648) and the grandmother of Mehmed IV (1648-1687).

Kösem Sultan, the *haseki* of Ahmet I stands out in Ottoman history as one of the most influential members in the harem in the early years of the seventeenth century. Greek by origin, Kösem Mahpaykar exerted some power during the sultanate of Ahmet I's brother Mustafa, but she emerged more prominently as *valide* of her fourteen year-old son, Murad IV.⁷² Upon the accession of Murad IV in 1623, the Venetian ambassador spoke highly of Kösem's political prowess:

(A)ll power and authority (is with) the mother, a woman completely different from that of Sultan Mustafa, in the prime of life and of lofty mind and spirit, (who) often took part in the government during the reign of her husband.

⁶⁹ Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, p. 177.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 294.

⁷¹ Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 133.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 138.

The English ambassador, Alexander Rose, also recognised the extent of her power by stating that Murad IV would also be 'gouverned by his mother, who gouverned his father, a man of spirit and witt'. During the Islamic month of Rejep each year, it was said that Kösem Sultan adopted a disguise and ventured beyond the harem walls to personally oversee the release of debtors and criminals (apart from those who had committed serious crimes) by personally paying either their debts or their compensation.⁷³

Kösem's political power, although not constant throughout her political career, was considerable at its peak. Her authority declined following the assumption of almost despotic power by Murad IV when he reached his majority. However, she re-entered the limelight with the accession of her second son Ibrahim, who was too busy with his debauched lifestyle, thereby providing Kösem with yet another opportunity to exercise her power in the government.

Kösem's troubles began with the emergence of her daughter-in-law and bitter rival, Turhan Sultan, on the political scene. Ibrahim's sexual impropriety and consequent neglect of government eventually led to his murder on the 8th of August, 1648 and the rightful successor was the six year-old Mehmed IV, the son of Turhan Sultan. Kösem remained as the *büyük valide* (grandmother) at the palace with Turhan Sultan as the *valide*. Harem intrigues led by Turhan against Kösem were rife, leading to the latter's plan to replace Mehmed IV with another grandson, Süleyman, whose mother did not share the ambition or fiery temperament of Turhan and who would be more pliable. Turhan however, got wind of her mother-in-law's intentions and acted swiftly. Intrigue and factionalism reached its peak at this juncture and Kösem was eventually murdered in her own chambers by a Janissary. The coast was then clear for Turhan to take the reins of government into her own hands on behalf of her minor son.⁷⁴

Turhan Sultan (fl. 1648-1687), the mother of Mehmed IV was the last great *valide sultan* during the almost uninterrupted sway of the harem in the

⁷³ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 209, 236.

⁷⁴ Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, pp. 138-140, 141-2.

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As is clear from a letter written by her to the Grand Vizier inquiring about the fall in revenue that flowed in from Egypt, the detail of information and knowledge that she had about state affairs was proof of her involvement:

What is the reason why the (annual) revenue of Egypt has fallen to 800 purses when it used to be 1200 purses?...What can they be thinking of that they send such a shortfall?⁷⁵

The tone of her letter, which is authoritative, assertive and demanding of explanations, also indicated her power.⁷⁶ She was clearly the driving force behind her son, who was prone to a life of pleasure. In fact, when she died in 1687, the historian Silahdar Mehmed Agha proclaimed:

everyone was sad and sorrowful and wailed, saying "Alas, the strongest prop of the state is gone".⁷⁷

Turhan's rule was not without discontent which peaked in 1653 (2 years after she assumed her position as *valide*), with the words of a sheikh who visited Istanbul from Diyarbakır (in eastern Anatolia) with the mission of spreading the word of God. According to the historian Naima, he blamed the government of Turhan for the ruin of religion and government and the misery of the people. This was fuelled by accusations of Turhan's alleged lesbian and incestuous relations within the harem. The sheikh's solution was to marry off the queen mother, to which a noticeable section of the populace also adhered. The sheikh was initially dismissed to a mental asylum and thereafter back to his hometown. Naima totally disagreed with the sheikh and remarked:

Those who say that the marriage of the queen mother is proper do not [ask whether], given the established usage of the state, it is even possible. Nor do they take into sufficient account considerations of its possible benefit or harm to this exalted state....The truth is, those who do not recognize the power and dignity of the sublime station of the most magnificent sultanate and the most exalted cradle [the queen mother] are ignorant....In my

⁷⁵ This undated letter by Turhan Sultan is located in the Topkapı Sarayı Museum Archives (E 7001/32) and appears to be written either in 1651 or 1652.

⁷⁶ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 236.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 239.

opinion, the aforementioned sheikh from Diyarbakır belonged in the lunatic asylum.

According to Peirce, Turhan's power as *valide sultan* was based on not only her profound familiarity with the inside workings of the harem institution over a number of years as *haseki*, but also her recognition of the significance and extent of the *valide sultan's* position and authority in the government.⁷⁸

The *valide sultans* and *hasekis* were not the only women from the Imperial Harem who influenced the politics of the time. As noted in Chapter 3 and through the earlier example of Mihrimah, princesses exerted immense influence in government, not only through the intricate factions within the Imperial Harem, but also on account of their all-important blood relationship to the reigning sultan and by virtue of their marriage to the high administrative officials. They appeared to be well aware of their authority, which they used at crucial moments. For instance, it was only Mihrimah's intervention that eventually persuaded Süleyman to spare her husband, Rüstem Paşa's life.⁷⁹ On the other hand, complaints by princesses about their husbands to the sultan could also result in their husbands fearing the loss of their title, wealth or even their lives, as the examples of Süleyman's sister, Şah Sultan, and Melek Ahmed Pasa's second marriage to Fatma Sultan demonstrate.⁸⁰ Once again, the covert networks of influence had a visible impact on the administration of the time.

The power of the harem came to an end with the death of Turhan Sultan in 1687. There was a brief flare-up of the power of harem women during the reign of Ahmet III (1703-1730) when his daughter used her power over her father and her husband, the Grand Vizier Ibrahim Paşa through intrigues to further the cause of France.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 112, 239, 282.

⁷⁹ See above, p. 164.

⁸⁰ See Chapter 3, p. 93. Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, pp. 142. Also see Suraiya Faruqi, *Subjects of the Sultan: culture and daily life in the Ottoman Empire* (London, 2000), p. 103.

According to Barnette Miller, the summer palace built in the eighteenth century became a retreat for harem ladies of relative freedom from the ceremonial formalities and numerous restrictions of the grand seraglio.⁸¹ Although the harem had faded from political significance in the eighteenth century, western influences began affecting royal and aristocratic Turkish women, thereby resulting in the relaxation of some of the stringent restrictions affecting women's seclusion in particular.

2.b) Diplomatic activities of harem women:-

The *valide sultans* and *hasekis* also played pivotal roles as diplomats and emissaries in keeping with Ottoman tradition, for there is evidence of the older members of the royal family being sent in person as emissaries from as far back as Mehmed II's reign (1444-6, 1451-81). In 1547, the rebellious brother of the Safavid monarch, who had fled to Istanbul, was appeased by Hurrem by showering him with gifts in an attempt to win him over as an ally since the Safavids were the enemies of the Ottomans. Süleyman also delegated the task of some of the diplomatic correspondence to Hurrem, as his spokesperson.

Hurrem's diplomatic activities are evident through two autograph letters. One of these letters is a congratulatory note on the accession of Sigismund (Zygmunt) Augustus in 1548 on the throne of Poland.⁸² As Peirce points out, the correspondence between Hurrem and Sigismund II continued with Hurrem acting as Süleyman's mouthpiece.⁸³ According to Yermolenko, Roxelana's involvement with Polish affairs had a personal dimension because of her Russo-Polish origin (although she is specifically believed to have originated in the Ukrainian town of Rohatyn) and she is said to have actively influenced the 'eternal peace' treaties of 1533 and 1553. West Ukraine at the time was under Polish control and these treaties, through their stipulations, significantly helped Poland to check Turkish raids and enslavement of Ukrainian

⁸¹ Barnette Miller, *Beyond the Sublime Porte*, p. 100.

⁸² Roger Bigelow Merriman, *Suleiman the Magnificent 1520-1566* (Cambridge, 1944), p. 17.

Sigismund did not send an ambassador to Istanbul until 1550.

⁸³ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 221.

inhabitants.⁸⁴ The second letter, found in the Polish archives, is a more formal and cordial communication between her and Shah Tahmasp's sister on the occasion of the establishment of the Süleymaniye mosque complex in Istanbul. The letter from Sultanım (Tahmasp's sister) not only contained a mention of a gift of carpets from the Safavid monarch for the new mosque, but also an acknowledgement of Hurrem's undoubted instrumentality in bringing about the recent Treaty of Amasya of 1555 between the two realms; further proof of the extent of Hurrem's involvement in foreign policy. Hurrem's letter is a response to hers with assurances of the continuance of peace between them. Therefore, it is clear that Hurrem's written communications with Poland and the Safavids was significant in terms of maintaining the delicate balance of cordiality in the volatile atmosphere of Süleyman's policy of conquest.⁸⁵

Fragmentary sections of additional autograph letters are part of the correspondence between Hurrem and Süleyman during his absence on military campaigns. Along with a mundane reference to daily affairs, concern for the physical well-being of their son Cihangir and the plague that had affected the capital, they also incorporated a plea in favour of Rüstem Paşa because of his mounting public unpopularity. Once again, her involvement in the affairs of the state was evident and ongoing.⁸⁶ Diplomatic activity on the part of the *valide* gained momentum particularly during the reigns of Murad III and Mehmed III, so much so that the Venetian ambassador, Soranzo, stated that 'grace and favors from the Porte' could be obtained by beseeching Murad III's mother or his favourite, Nurbanu and Safiye respectively.

Just as Hurrem ensured peaceful relations between her original homeland Poland and Istanbul, Nurbanu maintained correspondence with the Republic of Venice, partly in an attempt to restore peace between the two warring regions, and partly because her lineage could be traced to two important Venetian families. Her mediation went far beyond mere diplomatic correspondence and the bestowing of favours on ambassadors; she played a

⁸⁴ Galina Yermolenko, 'Roxelana', p. 239.

⁸⁵ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 221.

⁸⁶ Merriman, *Suleiman the Magnificent 1520-1566*, pp. 17-18.

significant role in ending war with Crete, which was a part of Venetian territory.⁸⁷ The peace treaty signed between Istanbul and Venice in 1573 is also attributed to her.⁸⁸ Her influence was so great that the admiral, Kilic Ali Paşa, who plotted the invasion of Crete totally abandoned even its mention to the Sultan once Nurbanu had warned him against it. He is said to have torn up the paper on which the proposal for the invasion was drawn up on the way to his meeting with the Sultan, saying that it was redundant now that the Valide Sultan had opposed it. This indicated the magnitude of her political influence.⁸⁹

The *kiras* (Jewish secretaries of the *valide sultans*) were largely instrumental in the writing of such correspondence on behalf of *valide sultans* and *hasekis*. Although the functions of *kiras* encompassed a broad range of activities, the ones with intellectual prowess attained lofty administrative heights such as the *Kira* of Nurbanu and Safiye, *Kira* Esther Manvali or Esperanza Malchi.⁹⁰ She handled Nurbanu's affairs with the bailo Nicolo Barbarigo and wrote her letters for her. The first two letters thanked him for the gifts and the third for the gift of silk cloth and also added that Nurbanu retained fond memories of her homeland. Another one complained about a letter lost at sea and yet another complained about the unsuitability of the lap dogs that had been given to the Sultana. When Nurbanu was ill with cancer, her last request was for cushions in a letter which arrived too late for she died on 7th December, 1583.⁹¹

Nurbanu was also in correspondence with Catherine de Medicis, the regent queen mother of Henry III, the king of France. The letters consisted of intimations of gifts being sent by the Ottomans and acknowledgement of gifts received and requests for favours from both parties. It was Nurbanu who was

⁸⁷ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 222. Nurbanu was the illegitimate daughter of members of two leading families in Venice. In 1583, the Venetian ambassador, Contarini wrote about the favours and gifts that had been showered upon him during his tenure.

⁸⁸ Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 128

⁸⁹ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 223.

⁹⁰ In keeping with her pious family background, she engaged in charitable activities. For a detailed description of her life as well as more information on the office of the *kira*, see Fanny Davis, *The Ottoman Lady*, pp. 143-144, Suraiya Faruqi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 105 and Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, pp. 135, 137.

⁹¹ Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 128.

responsible for promoting better relations between the Ottoman Empire and France by asking Catherine de Medicis to send an embassy to Istanbul. Catherine, for her part, is known to have written a letter to Nurbanu requesting her to intervene so as to enable the renewal of the trading rights which France had been permitted in 1536:—

Knowing the lofty place Your Highness holds next to His Highness the great Emperor your son because of your rare and excellent virtues, and (knowing) that (Your Highness) will always judge wisely and surely the extent to which it is necessary that the inviolable friendship which has long existed between (His Highnesses) predecessors and this crown be maintained and conserved for the common good and contentment of the two Princes, we have thought to write you to request, with the greatest possible affection, that you might use all good and commendable offices in such a commendable work...⁹²

Nurbanu's successor Safiye, followed in her footsteps by mediating, first, as *haseki*, and then as *valide sultan*. Entry number 752 of the Calendar of State Papers (between July 1590 and May 1591) also alludes to Safiye's mediation as follows:

However when the Viceroy had been corrupted in any matter, as in the Spanish and Polish affairs, "then we recur to other good friends", such as the Hogha, Mufti, or a neighbour of Barton's Mahomet Aga chief eunuch to the great Sultana, or Grand Signor's wife, who often delivered his supplications to the Grand Signor.⁹³

The Venetian ambassador, Bernardo, in 1592 proclaimed:

I always consider it wise to retain her good will by presenting her on occasion with some pretty thing that might invite her gratitude.

Moreover, in 1596, she was described to the Venetian Council in the following manner:

Through her intermediacy the ambassadors of Your Serenity have in different times obtained great favours, as you have been informed. She is a woman of her word, trustworthy, and I can say that in her alone have I found truth in Istanbul; therefore it will

⁹² Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 226-7.

⁹³ Richard Bruce Wernham (ed.), *List and Analysis of State Papers: Foreign Series, Elizabeth I, Preserved in the Public Record Office, vol. II, July 1590-May 1591* (London, 1969), p. 461.

always benefit Your Serenity to promote her gratitude, as I have many times already by presenting her (gifts).⁹⁴

While Mehmed III was away on a campaign in 1596, he entrusted his mother with complete control over all executive and financial affairs of state. The poet, Nev'i, in a poem dedicated to Safiye, refers to her as 'the queen of the age, mother of the commander of the faithful', and beseeches her to fight against the heretics.⁹⁵

Safiye's correspondence with Elizabeth I was significant in the workings of the diplomatic machinery. As Peirce suggests, Elizabeth's keenness to win the favour of the Ottoman Sultan found an additional welcome channel in Safiye. Safiye, for her part, maintained steady communication with her initially through scribes during her *haseki* days and later through the *kira* during her tenure as *valide sultan*. However, although the major part of the content of these letters revolves around the giving and receiving of gifts, this in itself was a significant basis for the power politics of the time. It is for example said that tensions between the two realms had risen over the delay in the receipt of the coronation gift from Elizabeth following the accession of Mehmed III. Peirce effectively exemplifies the political significance of gift-giving; the English ambassador to Istanbul, Edward Barton, in a letter to his government described the coronation gifts that Mehmed III had received from the Venetians and suggested the swift dispatch of the gifts for this occasion from the Queen. On the English side, discomfort ensued following the delay of the receipt of a ruby and pearl tiara from the Sultana and rumours were quietened in English and European courts only after its arrival.⁹⁶

The three letters to Elizabeth I were communicated through the *Kira Esperanza Malchi*, who also served Safiye. The first acknowledged a letter from the queen, but the next thanked her for the arrival of a stage coach, with which she was very pleased. Safiye reciprocated with a crown studded with

⁹⁴ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 223. The latter is an account by the Venetian ambassador Zane to the Venetian senate.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 239, 240. The campaign referred to is the Erlau campaign of 1596.

⁹⁶ Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 138 and Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 227-8.

jewels, three towels, a robe with a girdle and two embroidered handkerchiefs. She then asked for fine cloth, dresses, cosmetics, distilled water for her face and fragrant oils for her hands.⁹⁷ According to Paul Rycaut, the immense power that Esperanza Malchi (whom he refers to as Mulki Kadın) wielded was attributable to the fact that she and Safiye shared a sexual relationship:

For in the time of Sultan Mahomet (Mehmet III)...when the whole government of the Empire rested in the hands of one Mulki Kadın, a young audacious women, by the extraordinary favour and love of the Queen Mother (who, as it was divulged, exercised an unnatural kind of carnality with the said Queen) so that nothing was left to the counsel and order of the Visier and grave Seniors, but was first to receive approbation and authority from her; the black Eunuchs and Negroes gave laws to all, and the cabinet counsels were held in the secret apartments of the women; and there were prescriptions made, Officers discharged, or ordained as were most proper to advance the interest of this Feminine Government.⁹⁸

Thomas Dallam's narrative also includes mention of written communication between the two Queens. The then English ambassador, Henry Lello, sent his secretary, Paul Pindar (who later returned to Istanbul in the capacity of Ambassador from 1611-1619), with a gift for Sultana Safiye. We know that this gift (which was a coach worth £600 according to Dallam) was sent by Elizabeth I. Evidence of the gift is clear through Safiye's correspondence with the English Queen which refers to this Coach.⁹⁹ Dallam says that Safiye took a liking to Pindar and 'after wardes she sente for him to have his private companye, but there meetinge was croste'.¹⁰⁰ Dallam's mention of the Sultana, although brief, conveys a sense of the prestige and importance she enjoyed in Court.

Kösem Sultan, the *haseki* of Ahmet I, also continued the policy of goodwill towards Venice in the early years of the seventeenth century. Cristoforo

⁹⁷ For full details of the letters, see Sir Henry Ellis, *Original letters*, pp. 52-5. .

⁹⁸ Paul Rycaut, *Present State*, pp. 10-11.

⁹⁹ Susan A. Skilliter, 'Three Letters of Safiye to Elizabeth I', in *Documents from Islamic Chanceries, first series: Essays* (Cassirer, 1966), p. 148, Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 225 and Foster, Sir William (ed.), *The travels of John Sanderson in the Levant, 1584-1602*, p. 181. The first letter is located in the British Museum, Cotton Ms Nero B. viii, ff. 61-2, Plate XXXVII, while the latter two letters discussed in this section are present in folios 19 and 5 respectively in the Public Records Office S.P. 102/4, Plates XXXIX and XXXXL.

¹⁰⁰ Theodore Bent ed. *Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant*, p. 63.

Valier, the Venetian ambassador in 1613, recommended the cultivation of Kösem's good favour, as she held a position with highest influence as the *haseki* of Ahmet I. Later in her tenure as *valide* to Murad IV she advocated a truce between Spain and the Ottoman Empire even though her son disagreed. A Venetian report of 1625 confirmed this fact, while another report a year later said that the Sultan and most of his administrators were against the truce with the exception of Kösem and her two sons-in-law. The Spanish therefore knew that it was Kösem's favour that had to be obtained to prevail upon the Sultan.¹⁰¹

The evidence above shows the degree of influence wielded by royal women in general, and *valide sultans* in particular. This power was not only internally recognized but was also well known in European quarters across the Ottoman Empire. The Imperial Harem was viewed undoubtedly as one of the most effective channels to the Sultan and whose members' advice was valued.

Female power within the harem precincts however was not perceived positively by many Ottoman contemporaries. As mentioned earlier, Mustafa Ali had blamed the interference of 'Harem women' for the moral degeneration of the Empire.¹⁰² While some Ottoman writers do not mention women at all, other contemporaries of Mustafa Ali (for instance Sunullah Efendi, who was the *Mufti* responsible for interpreting Islamic law) portrayed them in a negative light, and even went so far as to trace the cause of the degeneration and weaknesses that had begun creeping into Ottoman economy, leadership and society on women. He quoted again the *Hadith* which denounced women's involvement in political affairs (discussed in Chapter 1) and used it to justify his views and to preserve male authority within the Muslim community.¹⁰³ It is a more poignant example of how this and similar misogynistic *Hadith* were used by Ottoman authors to devalue the status of women within the Empire.

¹⁰¹ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 223-4, 226. The sons-in-law in question were Rejep Paşa who was married to Gevherhan Sultan (who was most likely Kösem's daughter) and Bayram Paşa who was also married to her daughter Hanzade Sultan.

¹⁰² Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, pp. 258-9.

¹⁰³ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 179, 267. This is a reminder of the discussion of Mernissi's attempt to invalidate this particular *Hadith* in the first chapter.

Also in the late sixteenth century, Hasan Kafi-el-Akhisari, the author of a reform proposal identified two potential factors as being detrimental to the success of the Empire, one being 'esteeming the women and following their advice'. However this is evidence enough of the increasing power of not only the high-ranking royal women, but also the women who had the run of the household, such as the harem stewardess, the head of the administrative staff of the harem.¹⁰⁴ Despite this criticism, harem women had maintained their power over the politics of the Empire through much of the seventeenth century. Even if their political interference had been largely fuelled by internal factionalism and a desire to promote their authority through the ascension of their sons on the throne, it was their significant participation in conjunction with the vizierate that helped towards maintaining the power of the Ottoman Empire despite incompetent male leadership for almost a century.

Since there is currently a conspicuous lack of information as to whether, and if so, the manner in which Ottoman women lower down the social scale were involved in political activities of the kind that English women particularly during the Civil War period were, it is difficult to forge any comparisons or highlight any glaring distinctions. Generally, women did not enjoy much freedom of mobility except among the lower class and the poor, and certainly did not possess the right to elect the village headman along with their male counterparts.¹⁰⁵ Unlike England, where women gradually gained greater opportunities of education and therefore authorship and publication in the seventeenth century, which had enabled them to voice their political opinions especially during the Civil War, we have no evidence of similar changes or opportunities available to Ottoman women from the lower classes. This not only raises questions about women's awareness of political events but also literacy levels.¹⁰⁶ It may have been the lack of secular education that resulted in the absence of women's clamour for political involvement among the lower class. Such speculations may well be clarified or disproved once further

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 84, 179.

¹⁰⁵ Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, pp. 50-1.

¹⁰⁶ Female education in England and the Ottoman Empire will be briefly discussed in Chapter 5.

evidence is unearthed on lower class and poor women and their involvement in public life.

Conclusion:-

It is clear from the examination of female involvement in the political sphere in both realms that women's participation in any way in politics was viewed as interference and as something quite unnatural, which many contemporaries did not hesitate to vociferously declare. In England, queens regnant like Elizabeth tried to rise above the criticism by, for instance, emphasising her masculine self at crucial moments in her reign, while also using her femininity and sex to her advantage so as to present herself as the Virgin Queen married to her nation. Mary II was not only aware of the criticism against female rule but also portrayed herself as a subordinate wife. However, in the absence of her husband from the seat of government, she proved herself as a capable monarch. The Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, did not see a Sultana regnant, perhaps because Ottoman culture with its high emphasis on the seclusion of royal women made it impossible to contemplate a female ruler who would have to be publicly visible within and outside the Empire. However, the *hasekis* and *valide sultans* of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did in effect participate significantly in the administration of the Empire, albeit not in the same manner or extent as queens regnant. Their power was after all dependent on the Sultan and therefore they could not rule in their own right. The power they wielded despite their seclusion in the harem was immense, a fact which is also observable through their diplomatic correspondence which helped not only to maintain all-important delicate balances of cordiality between realms, but also in some cases, served to forge alliances with them. The intimate involvement of harem women in Ottoman administration along with the Grand Vizier and other prominent officials worked in tandem in maintaining the authority of the government in an age of incompetent sultans. Ottoman harem women emphasised their feminine attributes to attain power and respect. It was in fact their sex which had allotted to *valide sultans* the respect of their sons in line with Islamic principles, and it was their sexuality in the case of the *hasekis* which was instrumental in their rise in the sultan's favour from inconspicuous concubine

to the favourite. To this end they can be equated with the mistresses of the Kings of England who used their sexuality to further their influence. Nevertheless, the 'politics of reproduction' outside the marital context (with few exceptions like Hurrem), was formally institutionalised in the form of the harem in the Ottoman Empire whereas in England the influence exerted by mistresses was not an institutionalized avenue. Additionally, courtiers and aristocrats, male and female, also wielded their influence through queens regnant or queen consorts in both realms. Faction was rife in both courtly circles and women were well aware of the avenues through which they could make their covert presence felt in significant matters of state.

The most significant distinction in the authority that ruling women wielded in England and the Ottoman Empire was that the former did so in their own right while the latter's authority depended greatly on the reigning sultan. The maximum that they could do therefore was to ensure through harem factionalism the highest probability of their consorts' or sons' accession to the throne which was then the guarantee of their authority. The rise to power in the Ottoman context was however an extremely difficult task when we consider that all the concubines resident in the Imperial Harem were slaves who had been captured and brought to Istanbul from neighbouring lands. From their inception into the harem network, they not only had to come to terms with the fact that they were slaves who would most likely never see their homeland or families again, but also had to undergo elaborate training in order to become literate in Turkish and Arabic, learn the skills necessary to attract the sultan's attention and become well-versed with, and practise a new religion. Getting to grips with their altogether different existence must have been difficult to say the least, and accomplishing all the goals of their training and rising as the paramount force within the Imperial Harem was a feat in itself, which so many women successfully achieved.

In short, it is amply clear that although English and Ottoman women (particularly from the upper classes) were expected to carry out their prescribed social roles, largely within the confines of the domestic sphere, women found influential avenues through which they could ensure their

visibility in the male-dominated public sphere of politics and government. Affecting authority and influence more directly was easier for English royal women simply because they could ascend to the throne in their own right. However, as has been seen, female rule did not escape criticism and this was also true in the Ottoman case, where the immense influence of the *valide sultans* in particular, and that of Imperial Harem women in general, was concerned. The criticism directed at women, nevertheless, did not appear to deter their resolve to exert and maintain their authority and high social status through influential networks, thereby impacting (in varying degrees), the policies and history of the time.

Staying with the theme of participation and involvement of women in public life, the following chapter will focus specifically on the visual arts and literature, along with a brief discussion of women's education in both cultures so as to enable a better understanding of their artistic and literary activities.

THE VISUAL ARTS AND LITERATURE

As well as depicting the life and society of the time, the visual arts and literature have the most intriguing feature of fluidity through artistic and poetic licenses. While generally adhering to certain styles and formats, the artist and author have the power to adapt several external influences to their creation, thereby formulating an altogether unique style of their own. Therefore, in an age where insularity was gradually giving way to an ever-growing desire to explore beyond the boundaries of one's narrow world, inter-cultural influences and comparisons were inevitable. This chapter aims to concentrate on cultural comparisons in a particular context namely the involvement of women, both as artists and patrons, and their representation in the arts, architecture and literature in England and the Ottoman Empire. An attempt will be made to sketch the manner in which this participation and depiction varied, or then to suggest commonality between both cultures by looking at painting, the decorative arts such as embroidery, and architecture at length. This section tries to associate the involvement of women in the artistic sphere to their status as well as the authority they might have enjoyed. On the literary front, attention will be drawn to women's involvement in prose, poetry and drama and the manner in which they used their pens to voice their opinions about the positions to which women were relegated in spheres such as education as well as the way in which they employed their imagination to envision a world in which women were not only spiritual equals but also intellectual equals of men. The discussion of the above will then enable us to assess the areas in which the public and private spheres merged in both regions and the extent to which women were successful in creating a public image for themselves. Additionally, as has largely been the case throughout this study, the focus in this section too is on the upper classes of society since it was this section of society that specifically had the economic resources to engage in the extravagance of the patronage of art and architecture, and which constituted the larger majority of educated women who engaged in literary activities.

Women from the lower social classes are only mentioned intermittently so as to provide a better understanding of the discussion at hand.

Artists had to generally undergo training and an apprenticeship in a communal environment before going on to create paintings for public consumption. Since the audience and consumers were often from the upper echelons, the subject of their paintings may have leant towards the demands of their audience and what in particular might appeal to them. If there was a single patron involved, the artist usually restricted him or herself to painting what his/her patron desired. Painting was generally undertaken for a living and therefore artists often produced works based on the wishes of their patron/s since they were dependent on the patronage of an affluent family. Writers on the other hand did not undergo training or apprenticeship and generally wrote in a solitary environment for private consumption and particularly in the case of women writers, very rarely for a living. However, writers were generally well-educated and in this respect tended to be restricted to the upper and middle classes where the means to procure a good education were present. In general however, the challenges that women faced in both fields and cultures were notable as they attempted to overcome the obstacles and take a step into these male-dominated arenas.

It should be noted that only the visual arts where a significant comparison can be drawn between England and the Ottoman Empire will be investigated. Others like gardening and sculpture, where there is no evidence on the Ottoman side, are not tackled here. Furthermore, in an attempt to impose manageable limits on this section of the discussion, only some of the most influential literary works of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries will be discussed, despite the existence of a vast body of women's writing at the time.¹ In the field of painting and authorship, it will be observed that the balance clearly tips in favour of Englishwomen; an observation which is made

¹ Some of the authors discussed for instance, are Margaret Cavendish, Mary Sidney, Mary Astell, Aphra Behn, Mary Pix and Bathsua Makin to name but a few.

entirely on the basis of existing evidence and this balance may well be altered as new evidence on the Ottomans is unearthed.

1) ART

1.a) Women's representation in art:-

England:-

Women were subjects of portraits and paintings in early modern England, particularly in the case of the royal and aristocratic sections of society. Not only were there numerous portraits of queens regnant and queen consorts such as those of Elizabeth I and Anne of Denmark,² but also of noblewomen such as those of Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury (1530), Elizabeth Grey, Lady Audley (1540) and Lucy Harrington, Countess of Bedford (1615).³ In England, the subjects of portraits were both male and female from the royal and aristocratic families. Most portraits depicted the elite as it was that section of the population that could afford to patronise art and commission paintings. In particular, the depiction of female family members in all their finery and jewellery served the purpose of portraying the status and wealth of the family. In many cases, women were painted wearing jewellery given in dowry or as gifts and therefore this depicted the wealth of the ladies' fathers or husbands and their families.⁴

Apart from full-sized portraits, the art of miniature painting or 'limning', originating from the court, became virtually exclusive to the aesthetically insular English court for almost a century, its beginnings coinciding roughly with the Reformation in around 1525 till the latter years of James I's reign in

² Roy Strong, *Artists of the Tudor court: the portrait miniature rediscovered 1520-1620* (London, 1983), pp. 40, 42, 44-6, 109, 182, 195, 225, 242-44, 253-56.

³ *Ibid*, pp. 24, 31-2, 275.

⁴ David Manning, 'Portraits and Social Class' in *The British Face: a view of portraiture 1625-1850*, 19th February to 29th March 1986, catalogue edited and coordinated by Donald Garstang (London, 1986), p. 17. Some examples were for instance, the portrait of Elizabeth Pelham, wife of Charles, 2nd Viscount of Townshend painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller sometime between 1698 and 1711, that of Isabella, wife of Montague Garrard Drake painted by Charles Jervas in the early eighteenth century and the portrait of Anne Verelst painted by George Romney in the later half of the eighteenth century, pp. 42-3, 51, 82-3.

1620.⁵ Symbolism and the reflection of power became more pronounced in the miniatures of the later Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, which can be seen especially in some of the famous portraits of the Queen. The representation of the symbols and ideals of monarchy in the royal image was the prominent feature of late Tudor and early Stuart miniatures. The projection therefore, of a strong public image was key in the miniatures of the time.⁶

Instances of strong symbolic representation is evident particularly in some of Elizabeth's portraits. Although there are few surviving portraits of Princess Elizabeth, numerous portraits exist from the period of her reign. She was depicted as the 'Virgin Queen' reflecting her simple yet gracious image, at the dawn of her reign. However, her later portraits portrayed her in all her glory and were rife with symbolism. For instance, one of the most famous depictions of the Queen standing firmly in all her splendour on the map of England, emphasizing her strong foothold over her Empire, was the work of Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger in 1592.⁷ Another such symbolic portrait was the rainbow portrait, painted by Nicholas Hilliard. In this, the Queen is holding a rainbow in her hand implying that she was the sun which gave rise to the rainbow. Further interpretation of the portrait suggests that the eyes and ears on her gown indicated that she was the monarch who was omniscient where her Empire and subjects were concerned. Moreover, the embroidery of the serpent on her sleeve is indicative of her sublime wisdom.⁸ These images were suggestive of the undisputed rise in her popularity and her portraits could be seen not only in the houses of her nobles and aristocracy, but were also worn by them in their miniature form as part of their jewellery on their person so as to express their loyalty to their Queen.⁹ One of the most famous locket miniatures of Elizabeth, attributed to Nicholas Hilliard is The Heneage Jewel formerly known as the Armada Jewel (c. 1600) which depicts a dual

⁵ Roy Strong, *Artists of the Tudor court : the portrait miniature rediscovered 1520-1620*, p. 9.

⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 10-11.

⁷ For an illustration, see John Hayes, *The Portrait in British Art: Masterpieces bought with the help of the National Art Collections Fund* (London, 1991). Also see Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London, 1977), pp. 154-5.

⁸ Roy Strong, *Cult of Elizabeth*, pp. 50-1.

⁹ Roy Strong, *Artists of the Tudor court*, p. 10.

image of the Queen. The front of the locket portrays her image as the Queen of England, while the reverse of the locket depicts her as the Governor of the Church and Defender of the Faith.¹⁰

As noted earlier, apart from the royalty, the nobility also continued to be significant patrons of portraiture through the seventeenth century. As David Manning has shown, portraits of women commissioned on occasions of engagements or marriage to men from equally influential and wealthy families served to further reflect the status of families. As noted above, wealth and status was implied through not only the costume and jewellery worn by the female subject, but also through background motifs which clearly denoted their social standing. Similar suggestions were later adopted in portraits of the burgeoning middle class, which was keen to emulate their elite counterparts in wealth and grandeur. Therefore, the inclusion of servants and glimpses of grand houses in the background of paintings accompanied the figures in the forefront depicted in their finery. Therefore, the consciousness of class and its relation to status and wealth was a prominent feature of figurative representation in England.¹¹

Women were not just passive participants in art as subjects but also at times, actively involved as interested art collectors. However, women's active interest in art was often trivialised as in the case of Alatheia, Countess of Arundel (d. 1654), the granddaughter of Bess of Hardwick.¹² In the 1620s and 1630s she travelled on the Continent, often alone, for art collection purposes. Not only did she have a painting commissioned by the artist Rubens but was also involved in the purchase of the collection of the Duke of Mantua by Charles I. However, her solitary travel led to censure by men – women's affinity for art was often seen not as genuine interest, but as concern with interior decoration. Furthermore, the contribution of women like the Countess to art was often overshadowed by broader concerns such as the impropriety

¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 11, 129-130.

¹¹ David Manning, 'Portraits and Social Class' in *The British Face*, pp. 17-19.

¹² Anne Laurence, *Women in England*, p. 155-6, 160.

of her solitary travels. Superior artistic displays by women were also often hastily attributed to famed male artists, because of the reluctance to admit that women could not only equal the creative talents of men, but, in some cases, surpass them, as the following section investigates.¹³ Women on the canvas were perceived as less challenging than women in front of it. Therefore, women as subjects of paintings could be depicted by male artists within the accepted ideals of womanhood. As Kenneth Garlick has observed, propriety prescribed certain decorum where women sitting for a portrait was concerned which women adopted in their poses. However, as the eighteenth century advanced, in some female portraits (for instance, Gainsborough's portrait of the singer and musician Miss Anne Ford, 1737-1824), the stiffness of their poses began to give way to a more natural and relaxed depiction, which some women, such as the artist, Mary Delany (1700-88) found 'bold' and indecorous.¹⁴

Ottoman Empire:

According to Roderick Taylor,

The Ottoman Turks had a passion for decoration that allowed them to leave no surface undecorated; this passion is evident in every aspect of their lives.¹⁵

The representation of the human or animal form was not recommended in Islam as it was believed that such representation had the potential of resulting in idolatry and paganism. The opposition to figural representation is emphasized more explicitly through *Hadith* literature than in the Qur'an itself.¹⁶ For this reason, most traditional artistic designs among the Ottomans were of

¹³ *Ibid*, pp. 160.

¹⁴ Kenneth Garlick, 'Thoughts on Changing Attitudes to British Portraiture' in *The British Face*, pp. 14-30. Miss Anne Ford later became the third wife of the travel writer, Philip Thicknesse. For details, see Sophie Fuller, 'Thicknesse, Ann (1737-1824)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27179>, accessed 30 Aug 2007. For information on Mary Delany see Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg, 'Delany, Mary (1700-1788)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2005 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7442>, accessed 30 Aug 2007.

¹⁵ Roderick Taylor, *Ottoman Embroidery* (London, 1993), p. 7.

¹⁶ Terry Allen, 'Aniconism and Figural Representation in Islamic Art' in *Five Essays on Islamic Art* (California, 1988), pp. 17-37. For further information see Grabar, Oleg *The Formation of Islamic Art*, Rev. and enl. ed. (New Haven, 1987).

floral and geometric shapes. In spite of this 'prejudice', portraits and miniatures were commissioned by the Sultans and aristocrats for their personal galleries, but not publicly displayed, so as not to offend religious sentiments.¹⁷ Indeed figurative representations had been a feature of secular Islamic art since the early Muslim period and apart from repressive spells in its history, continued to be incorporated by Muslim rulers. Figurative representations in Islamic art however, were often strongly supported by decorative motifs which diminished the impact that a solitary figure may have caused.¹⁸

Miniature painting in the Ottoman Empire reached its peak in the sixteenth century, although women were not the subjects of these portraits, other than as spectators in celebratory scenes.¹⁹ Albums containing a combination of poetry, painting and calligraphy became popular in the first half of the seventeenth century and these often included images of harem women. An example of this is the album commissioned by Ahmed I. Women, depicted as appropriately dressed for the occasion are visible as part of a crowd or as observers from a sheltered pavilion in two miniatures for instance, illustrating public occasions like the funeral of Nurbanu found in the *Şahinşahname* of 1597 and the entry of Mehmed III victorious from battle in the *Şahname* of 1598.²⁰ In addition in some anthologies of poetry, women can be seen as entertainers in one of the illustrations in the *divan* of the poet Baki and as a part of a picnic party in the country.²¹ A probable explanation for the lack of female portraits in the harem was perhaps the segregation from strangers, including artists.²² Even if female portraits or sketches did exist, for example that of Hurrem in Richard Knolles's *Generall Historie*,²³ they were probably done by other women, eunuchs or family members all of whom were

¹⁷ Raphaela Lewis, *Everyday Life in Ottoman Turkey*, p. 154.

¹⁸ Terry Allen, 'Aniconism and Figural Representation in Islamic Art' in *Five Essays on Islamic Art*, p. 18. For instance, commemorative albums commissioned by sultans contained miniatures including figural representations and decorative motifs.

¹⁹ Godfrey Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 195.

²⁰ Nancy Micklewright, 'Musicians and Dancing Girls: Images of Women in Ottoman Miniature Painting' in Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the early modern Middle East* (New York, 1997) p. 158.

²¹ *Ibid*, pp. 158-9, 160.

²² Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 112.

²³ Richard Knolles, *The generall historie of the Turkes*.

permitted access to the harem. According to Fanny Davis however, the decorative arts, as far as the evidence suggests, were not the domain of women, apart from calligraphy and embroidery,²⁴ both of which will be discussed below. There is no evidence for women artists at court until the nineteenth century, probably because painting and drawing were not taught to the women of the harem.²⁵ Therefore, the likelihood of women artists or their works can only be mere speculation. We do know however, of the practice of presenting paintings to women of the royal family. Sixty-eight miniatures from a manuscript on Fortune and Astrology were for example, presented to Murad III's daughter, Fatma Sultan.²⁶

The eighteenth century witnessed a more elaborate representation of women through painting in images of individual women as opposed to depictions of women in crowds. Western influence was most clearly evident in the paintings of Levni (or Abdulcelil Çelebi), the official court painter of Ahmet III.²⁷ His paintings are captivating not only because of his fluid technique, but also because of his single figure studies, many of which were of women. He painted several figures of women dancing, combing their hair or carrying pitchers of water and so on. One of his most intriguing paintings is of female musicians, which dates back to 1720. Levni, who painted during the progressive 'Tulip era' is said to have been influenced by western style since his art incorporated not only detailed and intricate festive scenes, but also single figure paintings and sketches, rich in free-flowing lines and curves, distinctive of the rococo style.²⁸ Oktay Aslanapa suggests that the miniature of female musicians and dancer reflected a high degree of realism where their expressions and movements are concerned; one can not only almost hear the melody played by the musicians, but also picture the dancer's movements in

²⁴ Fanny Davis, *The Ottoman Lady*, p. 225.

²⁵ Nancy Micklewright, 'Musicians and Dancing Girls', p. 158.

²⁶ Oktay Aslanapa, 'The Ottoman Miniature Painting', in Kemal Çiçek, Erjüment Kuran, Nejat Göyüng, İlber Ortaylı (eds), *The Great Ottoman Turkish Civilization*, vol. 4, *Culture and Arts* (Yeni Türkiye, 2000), pp. 696, 697.

²⁷ Michael Levey, *The World of Ottoman Art* (London, 1975), p. 116 and Micklewright, 'Musicians and Dancing Girls', p. 161.

²⁸ Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 197.

perfect harmony to the music.²⁹ This and other depictions of dancing women conjure up the entertainment in the harems of the Sultan and the wealthy aristocrats of Istanbul. There are however no inventories existing of musical instruments and how musicians may have been taught. Not much is known about female musicians and singers, although it is known that maids and pages of the harem were involved in choirs and musical performances. By the eighteenth century it is clear that music was an art taught by the ladies of Istanbul's high society to their slave girls. It is however believed that the female poet Zeynep, who will be discussed below, was both a musician and composer, although no further details are available.³⁰ Levni's paintings raise the question of whether these were scenes witnessed by Levni or were based on hearsay and a consequent product of a creative imagination. We know of another painting attributed to him; of a lady holding a carnation in one hand and clutching the folds of her large gown with the other. According to Michael Levey, this portrait is of an identified person³¹ which suggests that Levni was acquainted with her. It is also possible that she was a member of Levni's family.

By the eighteenth century Levni's contemporary Buhari and his near contemporary Refail (or Refail the Armenian) had begun creating erotic miniatures. Their depictions were no longer classically depicted in a standard manner, but were more realistic. Abdullah Buhari, who flourished between 1735 and 1744, also produced single studies in a less fluid style than Levni's. His two most famous works are of a woman looking out of a window and a woman bathing in the nude, which was very daring at the time.³² Refail, trained in the European style, created works which were radical in that women were portrayed as gazing directly at the onlooker in tight, revealing clothing. His works, in two manuscripts titled *Hubanname ve Zenanname* (the book of

²⁹ Micklewright, 'Musicians and Dancing Girls', p. 161. Oktay Aslanapa, 'The Ottoman Miniature Painting', p. 699. For information on Ottoman male musicians and music see Recep Uslu, 'Musicians in the Ottoman Empire and Central Asia in the 15th century according to an Unknown Work of Aydınlı Semseddin Nahifi', pp. 548-552 and Ethem Ruhi Üngör, 'The Turkish Music and Instruments in the Ottoman State', pp. 535-546, in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, vol. 4.

³⁰ Faroghi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 121. Also see Nazan Bekiroğlu, 'Female Poets in Ottomans', in *Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, vol. 4, p. 250.

³¹ Michael Levey, *The World of Ottoman Art*, p. 116.

³² Micklewright, 'Musicians and Dancing Girls', pp. 162.

the merits and defects of men and women) by Fazil Enderuni, depicted women in the bath, an illustration of a woman seated in childbirth (which had no erotic overtones) and a midnight raid at a brothel, as well as picnic scenes with women.³³

The literary work or *Hamse* of Atayî, written in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century in the style of Persian poetry was popular among the Ottoman intelligentsia along with its illustrations in the eighteenth century. The five illustrations depict sensual, at times erotic, scenes. One depicts a group of men having a discussion outside a brothel, another of lovers in a pavilion and a third of a wife and her guests being surprised by the sudden appearance of her husband making love to a servant, both of whom are pushed into the room by a ram.³⁴

1.b) Women as creators of art:-

England:-

In early modern England women were actively involved in art, with some depending on their talents as a means of livelihood. A female artist of Flemish origin, Levina Teerlinc, was a significant portrait artist for approximately three decades and many early miniature portraits of Elizabeth I can be attributed to her.³⁵ Drawing and painting were necessary accomplishments of a gentlewoman in the seventeenth century and were therefore taught to many young women. Their involvement however was relatively rare as compared to their male counterparts, but, as Germaine Greer points out, women's paintings tended to depict traces of their suppressed personalities, their tendency towards self-deprecation as well as rebellious streaks and sometimes a combination of all these characteristics.³⁶

³³ *Ibid*, p. 162-3.

³⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 163-4.

³⁵ For details see Roy Strong, *The English Renaissance Miniature* (London, 1983), pp. 54-64 and Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society* (London, 2007), p. 116. .

³⁶ Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race: the fortunes of women painters and their work*, (London 1979), p. 7.

Since the line which demarcates painting and decoration was blurred, often artists were also active in building decoration. There is evidence of a handful of women who were artists and decorators. For instance, Widow Stanhopp (fl. 1626-7) ran an establishment of painters who worked on Theobalds, the king's residence. Margaret Pearce (fl. 1670-80), who belonged to a family of painters, personally contributed an altar-piece at St. Bartholomew Exchange. Mary Grimes (fl. 1679), like Pearce, also contributed to St. Michael Bassishaw, but was not a member of an artistic family.³⁷ After the great fire of London in 1666, building activity increased and consequently, so did the need for skilled artists and painters. This provided artistic women with the opportunity not only to obtain employment, but also to be recognised.

Although the presence of women in the field of miniature painting was more evident than in full-sized paintings, Artemesia Gentileschi (1593-1653), who painted for a living and was invited by Charles I in the 1630's to work alongside her artist father, Orazio Gentileschi on his commissioned paintings, was known more for her full-sized works.³⁸ Mary Beale (1633-97), who was trained under Robert Walker, made portrait painting her main source of livelihood to sustain her family. As recorded by her husband Charles Beale, she is said to have completed 83 commissioned works in one year alone. She also taught painting and one of her students, Sarah Cuties went on to achieve fame as an artist.³⁹ While Beale's work was often wrongly attributed to William Wissing, Susan Penelope Rosse's (1652-1700) emulation of Samuel Cooper's style (she was possibly his pupil) resulted in some of her work being attributed to him. She was well-known for her miniatures, some of which were not more than an inch long and included members of Charles II's court.⁴⁰ Anne Killigrew (1660-85), who was the maid of honour to the Duchess of York, was known

³⁷ Anne Laurence, *Women in England*, p. 158.

³⁸ Frances Borzello, *Seeing Ourselves: Women's Self-Portraits* (London, 1998), pp. 53-56, Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society*, pp. 105-113, Mary D. Garrard, *Artemesia Gentileschi around 1622: the shaping and reshaping of an artistic identity* (Berkley, 2001), Nancy G. Heller, *Women Artists: An Illustrated History* (New York, 1987), pp. 29-32, Wendy Slatkin, *Women Artists in History* (London, 2001), pp. 44-50 and Anne Laurence, *Women in England*, p. 159.

³⁹ Frances Borzello, *Seeing Ourselves*, pp. 62-67, Nancy G. Heller, *Women Artists*, p.47, C. Reeve, *Mary Beale: Paintress 1633-1699*, Tabitha Barber, *Mary Beale (1632/3-1699)*, (London 1999), M.K. Talley, *Portrait Painting in England: Studies in the Technical Literature Before 1700* (Paul Mellon Centre, 1981), pp. 270-305 and Anne Laurence, *Women in England*, p. 159.

⁴⁰ Nancy G. Heller, *Women Artists*, p.47-48 and Anne Laurence, *Women in England*, p. 159.

for her royal portraits including that of James II.⁴¹ Mrs. Elizabeth Creed (1642-1728) displayed her artistic and decorative skills in Canons Ashby in Northamptonshire as well as in the parish churches at Barnwell and Tichmarsh. Her daughter, Elizabeth Steward (1672-1743) was also an artist and assisted her mother with her project at Canons Ashby.⁴²

Although painting was a learned accomplishment of many women, mediocre efforts were often mocked and the creativity of female artists was often discounted. As Marcia Pointon illustrates, artistic efforts by gentry women were often perceived as amateurish. Consequently, only a handful of them could hope to earn a livelihood from their work, even though they continued painting.⁴³ The main stimulus for female professional artists was their family background. Women who belonged to an artistic lineage such as the Hogarths or Rubens' who had the privilege of being trained in its tradition or with progressive fathers and brothers who encouraged intellectual pursuits were the most likely to make a mark for themselves professionally in the artistic fields. Therefore, although there was no dearth of female artists, information about them or their existence is greatly limited because of the lack of surviving works by them.

Mary Moser (1744-1819) and Mary Grace (approx. 1740-1799 or 1800) stand out in the field of flower painting in the eighteenth century and both also painted self-portraits. Mary Moser's family background (she was the daughter of Swiss-born George Michael Moser, himself an artist and enameller) ensured that she was remembered. After receiving public recognition in 1759 at the age of fifteen, she rose to great heights as one of the only two female founding members of the Royal Academy. She not only received a large commission from her artist friend Princess Elizabeth, but was also honoured with an entire room at Frogmore House dedicated to her work, completed between 1792 and 1795.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Frances Borzello, *Seeing Ourselves*, pp. 58-59.

⁴² Anne Laurence, *Women in England*, p. 159.

⁴³ Marcia Pointon, *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture, 1665-1800* (Oxford, 1997), p. 139.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 133, 145, 146, 160.

Mary Grace's face is known through an anonymous engraving entitled 'Mrs. Grace, Paintress'. She began exhibiting in the 1760s and made painting a lucrative profession, since she was regarded as wealthy because of her artistic talents rather than advantageous marriages.⁴⁵

The number of female artists exhibiting their works gradually increased. By the late eighteenth century women's artistic talent, creativity and imagination was increasingly recognised publicly as being on a par with that of their male counterparts. For instance this public recognition occurred through writings such as *The Artist's Repository* (1770-1780). The eighteenth century increasingly saw the publication of specialist texts which encouraged women towards flower painting and botany. For instance, one text reads:

The general taste for painting flowers that prevails, and the great progress that some ladies have made in painting, is a convincing proof, that taste or genius for painting is not confined to the other sex; on the contrary, I am inclined to think that ladies would make much greater progress than men, were they first taught the proper rudiments.⁴⁶

Therefore, gender distinctions in this field appeared to be gradually blurring.

Embroidery was another art form in which women were active. This art form however, was practised by women largely in a private capacity within the home rather than as a means of livelihood or for public consumption. Rozsika Parker has very effectively pointed out the intriguing relationship between embroidery and femininity. In her opinion, the two were so closely intertwined that by the nineteenth century it was said that, 'Women embroidered because they were naturally feminine and were feminine because they naturally embroidered'.⁴⁷ This becomes all the more ironic in the face of evidence that from medieval times until the eighteenth century all professional embroiderers

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 134, 138, 141.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 135, 147.

⁴⁷ Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London, 1984), p. 2.

to the English monarchs were men.⁴⁸ This was perhaps a product of a wider patriarchal system in which women were deprived of the opportunities whereby they could prove their capacity to compete with men on a professional level. If there were women embroiderers in the service of the monarchs, their existence was excluded from the records. Embroidery or needlework became an essential part of a girl's education from the initial stages of her life, particularly from the seventeenth century onwards and was regarded as instrumental in inculcating femininity. As Parker states, it soon reflected not only the picture of home and family, but virtuous and chaste family women.⁴⁹

Embroidery, during our period, was relegated to a lower status to that of painting. As Parker points out, the reason for that may have had less to do with the art form itself, and more to do with the producers and the place of production. Embroidery was a private art form, practised by women for its own sake, not for its monetary value in public, like painting. Moreover, it was practised predominantly by women and, from the late seventeenth century onwards, by working class women, while it appeared that painting was an art where men predominated. Therefore it is not surprising that an art practised by the 'weaker sex' and also by the lower class was under-rated and trivialised. However, it worked in the other direction as well. Since it was a skill displayed in upper class homes with as much pride as in the homes of the lower class, it increased the value of this form of decorative art on the whole with the passage of time. Embroidery soon became synonymous with the concept of wealthy women who used embroidery to while away their hours of leisure. Leisure, which had hitherto been a luxury enjoyed only by the royalty and aristocracy, was now the domain of the rising affluent middle class of the seventeenth century. Embroidery, which was associated with the upper classes, also connoted gentility in a woman's character.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 11.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 60-1.

It was generally believed that embroidery was the one decorative art where women were expected to display their taste and keep abreast of, and incorporate changing fashion through their work. Embroidered pieces produced by women were either used in their own homes or then donated to churches or other establishments and generally attracted the curiosity of neighbouring women. Patterns and motifs varied from designs followed from embroidery books and creative innovations of patterns depicting personal interests to reproductions on fabric of paintings of famous artists, the latter trend gaining popularity in the eighteenth century. The superior calibre of Elizabeth I was further illustrated through her embroidery which depicted her translations of the French poem *The Mirror of the Sinful Soul* (1544) and Katherine Parr's *Prayers and Meditations* (1545). In the eighteenth century, a Miss Gray was commended by the author and patron of the arts, Horace Walpole (1717-97) for her copy of a Van Dyck painting displayed at the home of the Earl of Spencer at Wimbledon, while Mrs. Morritt remarkably reproduced a Rubens piece. Lady Caroline Conway was reputed for her swiftness in similar reproductions.⁵¹

Having been linked with the gentry, the practice of embroidery conferred upon the embroiderer a degree of respectability and, since embroidery evoked femininity, it was considered as a mark of gentility and domesticity. Hence, the merchant might desire a wife who had the appearance of nobility and the characteristics of domesticity, both of which, it was believed, were evident through the practise of embroidery.⁵²

Ottoman Empire:-

Until the nineteenth century, there were no women artists who publicly displayed their work in the Ottoman Empire. Mihri Hanim was one such female, who was educated in the western manner and skilled as a portrait artist.⁵³ Although female artists did not emerge until the nineteenth century,

⁵¹ Laurence, *Women in England*, pp. 148-9. Mrs. Morritt and Lady Caroline Conway also received high praise for their needlework talents from Horace Walpole.

⁵² Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, pp. 7, 62-3.

⁵³ Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 196. Micklewright, 'Musicians and Dancing Girls', pp. 163-164.

the skills of some female calligraphers have become apparent. Calligraphy did not originate with the Turks. Nevertheless, they adopted and practised the art with great enthusiasm and soon emerged at the forefront of Islamic calligraphy for the ensuing five centuries.⁵⁴ Like painting, it was an art in which the calligrapher was trained in a particular tradition and the acquisition of the art was based on the relationship between the master and student.⁵⁵ There is evidence of two female calligraphers who emerged on the Ottoman scene during this period. Ani Hatun made her mark in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as a poet and calligrapher.⁵⁶

More famous was Esma Ibret (d. 1780), wife and student of Mahmut Celaledin. Her calligraphic style leaned towards that of Hafiz Osman, an eminent calligrapher of the seventeenth century. Her work was so sophisticated that her husband had initial doubts as to whether it had been produced by a woman. This indicates how easily the talents of women were discounted or underestimated by men. Esma appears to have been fortunate in that her husband not only proudly promoted her work (known as *hilye-i-serif* or book of recitations) at court before Sultan Selim III and the then Valide Sultan, but also added a statement directed towards any sceptics about it being her work. Women, like their male counterparts produced calligraphic works of both a religious and secular nature; Esma's book incorporated sacred recitations. Derman attributes the survival of the art of calligraphy even through the twentieth century to the fact that it has the ability to exist in its original form free from Western influence. Unlike the other forms of art, which did not take root within religion, calligraphy was an art with little scope for external influences. Moreover, with a script so distinct from the Latin alphabet, it would be difficult to incorporate any features of Western calligraphy.⁵⁷

As in England, the art of embroidery was considered as an essential part of the education of every Ottoman girl whose family could afford this training,

⁵⁴ Derman, M. Ugur, 'The Ottoman Calligraphy', in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, vol 4, p. 659.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 659, 668.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 665.

⁵⁷ Fanny Davis, *The Ottoman Lady*, pp. 225 and Derman, M. Ugur, 'The Ottoman Calligraphy', in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, vol 4, pp. 665, 668..

irrespective of social status; the embroidery skills of a prospective bride were closely scrutinised, since it was believed that one's embroidery threw light on one's character. Although the more affluent ladies of Ottoman society were largely consumers, rather than producers, of embroidery, they took great care to ensure that their daughters as well as the slave girls under their charge were well-versed with this art.

Ottoman embroidery reached its zenith during the sixteenth century with exquisitely intricate pieces being produced by the royal and aristocratic harems and royal workshops. Both men and women were involved in the process, although their places of work differed, with men working in the workshops and women working at home. Embroidery was practised to a high degree of intricacy even before the Ottomans, in the Seljuk period. In fact, the daughter of the Seljuk Sultan, Alp Arslan, is known to have remarked when being spotted working on an embroidered piece:

Iranians are amazed at seeing me occupied with handiwork. However, in my family, all the women, like me, are occupied with handiwork. It is not suitable for our race to waste time.⁵⁸

There was however the general practice of weaving a small black thread into a corner of the embroidered piece so as to indicate that no matter how intricate and exquisite a piece, it could never aim to attain the perfection of God's creation.⁵⁹

Women often sold their embroidered goods to affluent women in the harems. There were also instances of women being commissioned by harem ladies for a specific work. During the seventeenth century there was a special market in Bursa where women could sell embroidery without paying any tax. There is also correspondence between Christian and Muslim ladies regarding certain embroidery designs and the desire of those Christian women to learn the designs from their Turkish maids, who were often employed specifically for this purpose. European illustrations of the eighteenth century depict the

⁵⁸ Davis, *The Ottoman Lady*, p. 227.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 227-9. Also see Sumru Belger Krody, *Flowers of Silk and Gold: Four Centuries of Ottoman Embroidery* (London, 2000), pp. 28-9 and Roderick Taylor, *Ottoman Embroidery*, p.169.

techniques adopted by female embroiderers. These European depictions were possibly a product of the observation of Turkish maids at work or the accounts of European ladies who may have witnessed female embroiderers in the harems of the Ottoman ladies they visited. However, the authenticity of the depictions should be seen with caution.⁶⁰

1.c) Assessment:-

In brief, paintings in England had women as their subjects from the beginning of our period; at first limited to largely royal and aristocratic women and later moving on to portraits and paintings of ladies belonging to the up and coming middle class and lower class. This was indicative of the fact that whereas earlier it was only royals and the nobility who could afford to patronise the arts, the passage of time and the growth of the Empire and fortunes abroad (as in England) had created a wealthy middle class who could afford similar pleasures. While miniatures and paintings of royal women were instrumental in furthering their public image and projecting a persona of power and authority, the representation of noblewomen and women from the middle classes on canvas, similarly aimed to present their public image. By depicting women in all their finery and in grand settings, these paintings symbolised the wealth and all-important social standing of the family to which the women belonged.

Female artists on the other hand did not receive the same credit as men. Not only was their work often looked upon with an extra critical gaze, but they probably had fewer opportunities for showing their work. The involvement of a male intermediary would often be required to further female artistic talents. Despite these obstacles, women artists strove to gain recognition and in some cases, not only adopted painting as a profession, but also received patronage from the royal court.

⁶⁰ Faroqi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 120.

It was a very different picture in the Ottoman Empire. Portraits and miniatures portrayed the sultans, their activities and the male members of the royal family; representations of the Sultanas and other female family members were extremely rare if we take into account the occasional engraving such as that of Hurrem found in Knolles' account. The paucity of female representation may largely have been due to the lack of female artists at the time, which in turn, may have been influenced by the absence of drawing and painting in female education. However, the sudden increase in the depiction of women in the eighteenth century provides food for thought. Remembering the Islamic tradition of the prohibition of figurative representation, Levni's works stood out as all the more bold as they were single studies of women without the focus on outlying decorative motifs. Was this suggestive of an overall introduction of an element of flexibility where the restrictions on women were concerned as a whole, or was this merely a consequence of artistic license? If the former, was this relaxation confined to images of the lower class? For among all these female images, there is none of the *valide sultans*, *hasekis* or any of the princesses for that matter, apart from the one sketch of Hurrem. It is tempting to deduce that paintings with female subjects represented the lower class since these women moved around in the markets with relative freedom sometimes unveiled. However, the women depicted in paintings appear to belong to the upper class or at least employed by the upper class, since their clothing and some of the activities portrayed, are those of the upper class of society. For instance, the painting of the group of female musicians gives the impression of the entertainment of the harem ladies being their main purpose. What is evident though is that women were increasingly represented in painting in the eighteenth and particularly in the nineteenth centuries which was possibly an outcome of external influences and western demand for artistic depictions which might serve to lift, at least partially, the veil of mystery that surrounded the lives of Ottoman women confined in their harems; the mystery that tweaked the curiosity in many a western imagination.

Although it is difficult to draw concrete conclusions of gendered space in relation to public/private spheres in the absence of detailed knowledge of

women's lives in the Ottoman Empire, Nancy Micklewright however emphasizes the importance of representations of women in the visual sphere.⁶¹ Women depicted within their private spheres through the limited space of the canvas were visible in the public context without physically entering the public sphere themselves.

Where the art of embroidery was concerned, Ottoman embroidery resembled, and yet differed from English embroidery. Unlike in England, the majority of embroidered pieces were produced for sale. Almost every item of cloth utilised in the Ottoman household was embroidered; the apparel of the ladies or a cushion cover, bedspread or handkerchief. In this respect it was a public art. In addition, unlike in England, women were also professional embroiderers in the Ottoman realm. The fact that embroidery revealed an Ottoman woman's character resembled English belief. However, in England, embroidery as an art form received limited recognition and was relegated to a status lower than that of painting. This may have been on account of the notion that embroidery reflected the femininity of women and, in this respect, unlike painting, it was not an artistic form largely practised by men (apart from the professional royal embroiderers), and therefore not worthy of the same degree of recognition.

2) ARCHITECTURE

2.a) Design and patronage:-

England:

Although men dominated building activities, there are a few instances of women who either worked alone or in conjunction with their husbands in the designing and commissioning of buildings. The alienated wife of the Earl of Shrewsbury, Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury (1518-1608), better known as Bess of Hardwick, invariably comes to the fore while discussing the role played by women in the architectural field. During her marriage to Sir William Cavendish in 1549, Chatsworth in Derbyshire was purchased by him and she began construction there. She was also instrumental in building her third husband's, the 6th earl of Shrewsbury's house, Worksop Manor. She spent

⁶¹ Micklewright, 'Musicians and Dancing Girls', p. 165.

two years between 1587 and 1589 renovating her father's house where she lived after her estrangement from the Earl. However, after her husband's death in 1590, she abandoned this scheme and focused her attention on the construction of the new Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire, situated near the old building. Work on Hardwick Hall ended in 1597. She adopted a Renaissance style in its construction and with her initials E.S. on the tops of the corner towers and her coat of arms liberally displayed in the interior she firmly placed her mark on the building.⁶² In this manner her public image was established as the person responsible for its imposing construction and this image would be clearly visible and felt for the life of the structure.

Although records do not reflect a significant contribution of women towards the construction and commissioning of buildings, this was not uncommon. They at times acted in the names of their husbands, which is why their contribution was not entirely recognised. It was in fact the wife of the 8th Earl of Rutland (d. 1671)⁶³ who commissioned John Webb to reconstruct Belvoir Castle in the 1650s, which had fallen victim to the Civil War. The Marchioness of Ormond (d. 1684)⁶⁴ was deeply involved in the restoration of Kilkenny Castle and the building of Dunmore in Ireland and her husband's house in Hertfordshire, as we learn from her correspondence in the 1660s and 1670s.⁶⁵

Born and bred in a well-educated and cultured family, Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke (1561-1621), numbered among the courtly circle of Queen Anne of Denmark (the wife of James I), along with other noble women of high standing also involved in architectural activity, such as the Countess of Bedford, Lucy Harington and the Countess of Suffolk, Katherine Howard (b. in or after 1564- 1638). Apart from her literary activities, she found ample time after her husband's death (in 1601) to construct a grand house, reflecting her

⁶² Mark Girouard, *Hardwick Hall* (London, 1989), p. 4. Malcolm Airs, *The Making of the English Country House 1500-1640* (London, 1975), pp. 1-2, 13 and Anne Laurence, *Women in England*, pp. 153-4. As defensive construction gave way to more comfort-orientated abodes, buildings and houses soon became a reflection of social standing – the grander the construction, the higher the status and financial position.

⁶³ The 8th Earl of Rutland was John Manners and his wife was Frances Montagu.

⁶⁴ The Marchioness of Ormond was Elizabeth Butler (1615-84) married to James Butler (1610-88).

⁶⁵ Laurence, *Women in England*, p. 153.

refined taste, in the shape of an H in the manor of Houghton Conquest in Bedfordshire, which had been presented to her by King James I in 1615.⁶⁶ Lady Anne Clifford's (1590-1676) commissions in the field of the visual arts were striking and unique in that her preoccupation with the reading of texts resulted in the construction of monuments which were not only rich in inscriptions of quotations, but were also traditional and therefore non-conformist in terms of the fashion of the age, namely the Italian Renaissance styles which were dominating the artistic scene. As Alice Friedman writes, it was her increasing aloofness from the rest of society as she immersed herself in her 'good books and virtuous thoughts' that shaped her stylistic inclinations which were so cut off from the prevalent fashion.⁶⁷ The restoration of castles on the Clifford estates was of particular interest to Anne Clifford, who was involved in lengthy legal proceedings to recover the estates. In the 1650s and 1660s, she either restored or rebuilt the castles at Brough, Brougham, Appleby and Pendragon in Westmorland as well as the castle at Skipton in Yorkshire.⁶⁸

Undertaking grand architectural endeavours proved to be the medium for the male population of England to display not only their social standing, but also their education and taste. Society however, did not require women to make their presence felt in this manner. Additionally, even if they desired to undertake such endeavours, only a handful could afford to carry them through since most women did not possess their own finances. Architectural endeavours undertaken by women were either financed by the wealth of their husbands (as in the case of the Countess of Rutland), or with the funds left by their deceased husbands as their widow's jointure⁶⁹ (as in the case of Mary Sidney), or then, in a handful of cases, with their personal inheritance (as in the case of Lady Anne Clifford). The example of Lady Wilbraham (1632-1705) indicates that she used both her inheritance as well as her husband's money to build and possibly design her house at Weston-under-Lizard in

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 154.

⁶⁷ Alice Friedman, 'Constructing and Identity in Prose, Plaster and Paint: Lady Anne Clifford as Writer and Patron of the Arts' in Lucy Gent (ed.), *Albion's Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550-1660*, (London, 1995), pp. 362, 372.

⁶⁸ Laurence, *Women in England*, pp. 154-5.

⁶⁹ A jointure was an estate settled on a wife to be taken by her in lieu of dower.

Staffordshire and her husband's house at Woodhey in Cheshire. However, although widows could have control over their finances, they were often not wealthy enough to spend so lavishly.⁷⁰

Interestingly, houses in the sixteenth century were geared towards the segregation of the sexes rather than of the classes. There was normally a large hall for communal male activities, while the private quarters around it was where the women were housed. The following century witnessed a gradual shift in these dynamics. Class distinction began overpowering gendered segregation, evident in the layout of the large houses. There were large state rooms explicitly for entertaining purposes, particularly the monarchs. There were rows of rooms for men and women, but the separation of the sexes was not as starkly visible as it had been in the preceding century.⁷¹

One means by which a family could be commemorated was through the modifications of sections of churches. For instance, Lady Sherard in the early seventeenth century rebuilt the south side of Stapleford church in Leicestershire and added a family vault to it. Institutions such as almshouses, hospitals, schools and colleges also received the patronage of women, even though they often did not have a voice where their design was concerned.⁷² This brings to light women's involvement in not only the creative aspect of commissioned architectural endeavours but also their active participation in its patronage through commemorative monuments.

Ottoman Empire:

As amongst the affluent in England, works of public piety formed an integral part of Islam and those who had the means felt it their duty to commission and donate money towards the construction of mosques, hospices, schools (*Medresses*) and soup kitchens. Along with this, royals and aristocrats had tombs and palaces built for themselves. It is noteworthy that according to

⁷⁰ Laurence, *Women in England*, pp. 153-4.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 155.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 156-7. Lady Sherard also erected a commendable monument to her husband and repaired the chancel roof in a neighbouring church at Whisseldine.

early Ottoman tradition, royal wives did not have the right to indulge in such public activity since they were excluded from motherhood and were consequently perceived as secondary to royal concubines who were the mothers of the sultans' offspring.⁷³

Until the construction of Murad III's mosque complex in Manisa in the late sixteenth century, the two most significant structures therein were the structures built by Süleyman I's mother, Hafsa Sultan, and his unmarried sister, Husnushah Khatun. Manisa was Süleyman's provincial post prior to his accession. The most significant feature of Hafsa Sultan's mosque complex was that it had two minarets, which had hitherto clearly been the imperial prerogative of the sultan. Hence, this in itself was evidence enough of the exaltation of the *haseki's* status to imperial heights. Hafsa Sultan's complex (which was named 'Sultaniye' in keeping with its imperial status) consisted of a mosque, a religious college, a school, a hostel for the dervishes and a soup kitchen providing considerable employment. Income from lands acquired from both Selim I and Süleyman, was utilised for the endowment of this complex. Hafsa Sultan had bought numerous shops and booths in Izmir, whose revenues went towards the maintenance of the mosque complex. Süleyman later added a hospital and a bath to this complex in his mother's name. Clearly Hafsa Sultan was an important figure in the Imperial Harem and set an example for the powerful *hasekis* and *valide sultans* in succession.⁷⁴

While all the mosque complexes associated with women prior to Süleyman's reign were found in the provincial capitals, his *haseki* (later wife), Hürrem and their daughter, Mihrimah had mosque complexes in their name in the Empire's capital, Istanbul. During Süleyman's rule, Istanbul witnessed the construction of five mosque complexes, of which three were built by or for royal women. The 'Haseki complex', as it was known, built for Hürrem in 1539 was the earliest structure and consisted of a mosque, a religious college, a primary school, hospital and soup kitchen. Hürrem's single-minareted mosque attracted an increasing number in its congregation and had to be extended by

⁷³ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 40-1, 300 n.103.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 189, 199-200.

a second chamber in 1612. The complex at Üsküdar was dedicated by Süleyman to Mihrimah in 1547. Mihrimah herself was involved in the building of the third complex in the 1560s at Edirnekapi. The location and number of Hurrem's monuments were what distinguished her from her predecessors and emphasized her high status. According to Peirce, 'For the first time in the history of the Ottoman dynasty, the building enterprise of a royal concubine can be said to constitute an architecture of power.'⁷⁵ The structures built by and for her served to highlight her public image and emphasized the prestige of the royal family in general. Although the grandiose scale of the Haseki complex reflected its magnificence, it did not enjoy the imperial status that Hafsa Sultan and Mihrimah's complexes bore by virtue of their double-minareted structure. This is perhaps due to the fact that Hurrem was not a blood relative of the sultan.

Mosque complexes often either served to rejuvenate the neighbourhood in which they were located, or create a new neighbourhood, with the mosque featuring as its centre. Even though complexes of royal women did not occupy prime locations such as those of the sultans, they were the focus of attention for the area of their location. For instance, Hurrem's mosque was located close to the 'Women's Market' and the mosque as well as the neighbouring bath was primarily for the benefit of women.⁷⁶ It largely served the women of its vicinity and not only did the area adopt the name of the mosque (*Haseki*), but the mosque itself came to be popularly known as *Haseki Avra'* (woman). According to the sixteenth-century French ambassador Codignac however, if Hurrem's intentions in endowing a pious foundation was an attempt to gain her liberty and establish her position as Süleyman's consort, the construction of such a pious foundation was not an unprecedented one, despite the fact that her intentions may have been ingenious.⁷⁷ However, it was the scale of this construction that was unprecedented. The obvious concern on the part of Hurrem for her other women was also clear through, not only the location of her public bath, but also from its structural perspective. Situated in the prime

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 199.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 200-1. Tradition reckons that the mosque built by Gulfem Khatun, who was another important member of the Imperial Harem, primarily benefited women.

⁷⁷ Rogers and Ward, *Süleyman the Magnificent*, p. 18.

area around the palace, Aya Sofya and the Hippodrome, it consisted of two separate sections, endeavouring to serve both sexes of the congregation of Aya Sofya.⁷⁸ In this manner, Hurrem had made her presence felt visibly to both men and women.

Apart from the mosques at Istanbul and Edirne, Hurrem also had mosques in her name in the three most revered cities of Islam – Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. Like the complex at Edirne the Jerusalem complex consisted of inns and soup kitchens, along with other public facilities. The Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem mosque complexes were aimed towards fulfilling one of the foremost duties of the dynasty in general, and of Muslims in particular. Charity, the giving of alms and services directed towards the poor were the primary activities. Hurrem's *vakfiye* (trust) of the Jerusalem foundations, appointing herself as the first comptroller for life, reserved her the right to make any changes in its provisions and she may well have exercised this right with her foundation in Istanbul, thereby further exemplifying her influence and authority.⁷⁹ In addition, Hurrem also endowed a mosque at Kağıthane, dated 1557-8 and a Zaviye for dervishes in Balar, dated mid-January 1549.⁸⁰

Hurrem had certainly made her mark on the public canvas of not only Istanbul, but of the Empire as a whole. Her importance as one of the most influential members of Süleyman's inner circle, lies in the nature of the privileges allotted to her. This shows the great extent to which she could wield her influence over Süleyman. An endowment deed of 1560 in her name described her as:

the quintessence of the queens amongst women, the Zobeida of her time and age...who is unique and to whom there is no second queen in prosperity and good fortune...⁸¹

Hurrem's example of architectural patronage was followed by the succeeding *valide sultans*. As the emphasis shifted in the post-Süleymanic era from

⁷⁸ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 199-200. Also see Rogers and Ward, *Süleyman the Magnificent*, p. 18.

⁷⁹ Rogers and Ward, *Süleyman the Magnificent*, p. 20.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁸¹ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 202-5. Zubeida was the wife of the renown eighth-century Abbasid caliph Harun-al-Rashid. She was responsible for a large number of public works directed towards the benefit of the Muslim community.

military expansion towards the protection of the empire's lands, the promotion of Islam and the endowment of charitable activities for the benefit of the subjects took over the limelight; and as Peirce shows, this was a royal prerogative in which women could be heavily involved.⁸²

Nurbanu's mosque complex was the only one built between the construction of the Süleymaniye in 1557 and Ahmet I's mosque. Described by Evliya Çelebi as the 'mountain of light', it was the first mosque to have been permitted the imperial prerogative of two minarets in Istanbul. Hitherto, the other double-minareted structures had been situated in provincial towns. Therefore, the construction of an imperial mosque in Istanbul spoke volumes about the immense authority of the *valide sultan*. Nurbanu's complex, more than any other imperial complex built by a woman in Istanbul, appears to have been clearly geared towards the convenience and comfort of the masses, thereby enhancing her public image as a concerned member of the ruling dynasty. At times, the intentions were clearly stated in the foundation deeds of mosques; for example, the deed for Nurbanu's mosque stated:

her desire of acquiring merit in Allah's sight,...In genuine and sincere determination, devoid of hypocrisy or deceit, with only the purest of intentions, she ordered the erection of many great and magnificent edifices of charity.

An underlying reason to mention this probably lay in the fact that she had been an Orthodox Christian prior to her conversion, and such a statement was proof of her complete conversion in the eyes of her subjects.⁸³

Nurbanu's complex also encompassed two public hostels for travellers and the homeless, heated rooms for visitors, a refectory and a storehouse. The earnings from the neighbouring public bath were invested in the maintenance of this complex. According to Evliya Çelebi, a meal served on Thursday evenings in the soup kitchen of this complex was unique, as it consisted of a

⁸² Leslie Peirce 'Beyond Harem Walls: Ottoman Royal Women and the Exercise of Power,' in D.O. Helly and S. M. Reverby, (eds), *Gendered Domains: Rethinking public and private in women's history: essays from the Seventh Berkshire Conference on the History of Women* (Ithaca, 1992), p. 48.

⁸³ Philip Mansel, *Constantinople*, p. 92.

dish of sweet saffron rice which was usually eaten at weddings. Nurbanu's mosque was also the first mosque with a library for the benefit of religious scholars.⁸⁴

Mosque complexes were also commissioned by the succeeding *valide sultans* Safiye, Kösem and Turhan, the last being involved personally in the supervision of the construction and design as well from a concealed pavilion.⁸⁵ The construction of her imperial complex becomes all the more poignant when one considers the fact that her son, Mehmed IV, despite his fairly substantial period of rule, had no mosque built to honour him.⁸⁶

As would be expected, the number and scale of the architectural endeavours undertaken by harem women followed the harem hierarchy with the greatest architectural projects being attributed to the *valide sultan*. Princesses were generally married off with large dowries in their name, which they often used towards philanthropic causes. As Bates points out, of the 953 Ottoman structures in Istanbul, 68 of them were traced to women, while of the 448 structures designed or restored by Sinan (one of the most renowned architects of the Ottoman era) 39 were built by or for women. According to Faroqhi, thirty-seven per cent of all pious foundations were attributable to women. Bates places these figures in the context of the society of the time. Viewing these figures of female participation within a patriarchal society emphasizes their significance, and highlights the consequent marvel of the successful undertaking of such large-scale endeavours. There were indeed limits in operation here too. Secular structures such as *caravansarays* were rarely associated with women, but if they were, the income generated by them was put towards the maintenance of the religious monuments. Hence, the fact that women primarily associated themselves with religious monuments rather

⁸⁴ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 186, 208.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 206, 208, 211, 331 n.99. Ulku Bates, 'Women as Patrons of Architecture in Turkey', in Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (eds), *Women in the Muslim World* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 249-50, 259.

⁸⁶ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 206-8. Also Ulku Bates, 'Women as Patrons of Architecture in Turkey', p. 256.

than secular or residential ones has its bearing in the conventions of Ottoman social traditions.⁸⁷

However, Peirce states that after the augmentation of the status of the *valide sultan* following Hurrem, the most monumental and magnificent imperial mosques soon became the exclusive prerogative of the *valide sultan*. The remaining majority of harem ladies could only undertake pious works in the form of covert charitable acts. Therefore, with the exclusion of the stunning Sultan Ahmet Cami (Ahmet I's imperial mosque, otherwise commonly referred to as the Blue Mosque) completed in 1617, all the imperial mosques constructed in Istanbul between the latter years of the sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, were built by or in the name of the sultans' mothers.⁸⁸

2.b) Assessment:-

Women, on the whole, unlike men, were not confined to the emphasis on the display of taste, education and status while undertaking architectural activities. Consequently, they exercised a higher degree of freedom in the design and style, as can be seen particularly in Bess of Hardwick's design of Hardwick Hall. They often did not adhere to the most 'fashionable' style of the age; for instance, women leaned towards the commissioning of structures in erstwhile Gothic style, no longer evident in buildings constructed or commissioned by men.⁸⁹ The refined side of building was however, the prerogative of largely upper class women. Women from the lower classes had the power to make only a modest mark, if any, in the architectural arena. As for the poor, some women were associated with working as labourers. When associated with construction of personal homes, it was out of sheer necessity as a means of shelter rather than any fanciful and decorative motives.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Ulku Bates, 'Women as Patrons of Architecture in Turkey', pp. 246-7, 249. Also see Faroghi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 118.

⁸⁸ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 206.

⁸⁹ Laurence, *Women in England*, pp. 157.

⁹⁰ Malcolm Airs, *The Making of the English Country House*, p. 154 and Laurence, *Women in England*, pp. 152-3.

The commonly employed European symbolic representation of royal power particularly that of women through, for instance, paintings, was not an option in the Ottoman Empire on account of the Islamic prohibition of human imagery. Therefore, architecture was one of the most significant means of symbolising the political power and influence of harem women in general, and the *valide sultans* in particular. Both Peirce and Bates clearly link architectural activity with political strength, particularly towards the latter part of the period under investigation, when the sultans' participation in public affairs dwindled. Peirce suggests that in such circumstances, the increased architectural patronage on the part of women, served to reinforce the public image of the dynasty and also emphasized the underlying statement of female power. In cases where women were free to handle their own finances, particularly princesses, they used part of their large dowries for architectural projects. Although the procedure adopted by men and women alike prior to and during building, was identical, there were certain limiting factors to female architectural activity; these included the fact that permission invariably had to be sought from the sultan, and the sites where women were permitted to pursue their endeavours were not as central as those sites devoted to the sultans' mosque complexes. Moreover, the danger of architectural endeavours being halted in favour of those of the sultan also at times affecting women's architectural activities was likely; and the resources of the halted project were transferred towards the construction of the complexes of Sultans. Despite these checks, the number of structures constructed and the increasing scale of the projects themselves reflected the political influence of royal women, which was further enhanced as the complexes often constituted the centre of community life in the neighbourhood.⁹¹

While comparing architectural endeavours in England and the Ottoman Empire, the motives for construction appeared to have differed in both regions. The Reformation had resulted in a shift of focus from religious architectural structures to more secular ones, particularly since the abolition of monasteries had resulted in the availability of large sums of money for the

⁹¹ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 186-7 and Bates, 'Women as Patrons of Architecture in Turkey', pp. 245, 257-8.

construction of secular structures and relieved the masses from the overriding need to work towards securing the afterlife through religious endowments. Furthermore, a gradual shift in lifestyle in England had led to the replacement of defence-oriented accommodation with comfortable abodes, which opened the doors of building opportunities for women with an architectural bent of mind. At times, as in the case of Bess of Hardwick, they were directly involved in the actual design of the structures as well. Ottoman construction on the other hand was guided by one of the most primary duties of Muslims, namely the undertaking of pious deeds. Ottoman women aimed at public service through the endowment of public structures which would be beneficial to the masses and which vicariously projected them as public figures. Apart from being creatively involved in architectural endeavours, women in both cultures were also involved in the patronage and endowments of monuments and buildings which were other avenues for making women visible in the public eye. While the creative aspect of architectural activity in England included royal, upper and middle class women, at least in the Imperial Harem, the creative aspect of architectural activities was limited to the *valide sultans*. All the other harem women who wished to be visible in the public eye through architecture could only do so through the patronage of already-existing structures or through endowments.

As is evident from the above, whereas the balance is heavily tipped against Ottoman women in the sphere of painting, architecturally their contributions were highly significant. The cultural divide appears to be the cause for this discrepancy because of the segregation of the sexes adhered to in Ottoman aristocratic society. In general, it does appear that it was the more affluent section of the population who enjoyed the privilege of indulging in artistic endeavour in both regions and this is more evident in the field of architecture. Thus in both cases social status, political authority and influence and economic power seem to have more overtly been transferred onto public space, which in the case of the Ottoman Empire proved to be crucial where presenting the public authority of a gradually-crumbling Empire was concerned.

3) LITERATURE:-

Before launching directly into a discussion of women's literary activities in both cultures, it would be helpful at this point to take a brief look at female education and literacy in both regions so as to place their literary activities in perspective.

3.a) Education:-

England:-

Female education had undergone significant changes during the period under study which affected all strata of society which could afford to educate their daughters. The early sixteenth century witnessed, albeit for a brief period, female education on a superior level. Humanists of the time such as Erasmus (1466-1536) encouraged this trend and Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) declared:

if the female soil be in its nature stubborn, and more productive of weeks than fruit, it ought, in my opinion, to be more diligently cultivated with learning and good instruction'. 'I do not see why learning...may not equally agree with both sexes.'⁹²

Consequently, the first half of the sixteenth century saw the presence of a number of royal and upper class ladies who were steeped in the knowledge of classical languages and grammar, for instance, Elizabeth I, Lady Jane Grey and the daughters of Sir Anthony Cooke, to name a few.

Changes ensued with the English Reformation. The vernacular translations of the Bible following the Reformation brought the teachings of God to families on an individual level without an intermediary priest as had been the case in pre-Reformation England. This further emphasised the need for literacy of women who were now not only responsible for their own spiritual well-being but also that of their children and servants (as had been later prescribed by Gervase Markham as the duty of a wife, mentioned in Chapter 3) to whom they were expected to impart religious doctrines. In 1564 the Puritan reformer Thomas Bacon advocated the establishment of schools for less privileged

⁹² Paul N. Siegel, 'Milton and the Humanist Attitude Toward Women' in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 11, no. 1 (January, 1950), pp. 45-6

girls on the grounds that women too were God's creatures and that no woman could govern her home in a godly manner unless she had godly virtues instilled in her through a proper education. The rise of Protestantism (puritan Protestantism in particular) with its emphasis on docility, chastity and silent submission, coupled with the English translation of Baldassarre Castiglione's *The Courtier* in 1561,⁹³ advocating women who were limited in their education, but well-versed with all the social graces, led to a gradual dwindling of the category of sixteenth-century learned ladies in England by the end of the seventeenth century. While Protestant theologians propounded Luther's views through statements such as, 'Women should remain at home, sit still, keep house, and bear and bring up children', the handful of women who managed to acquire a comparatively full education were satirized since 'Plato in petticoats', was considered as an unattractive feature, both in Restoration drama and society.⁹⁴ It is important to keep in mind that although 'pure humanistic learning' was beginning to give way to more functional education with greater emphasis on religious learning, it was precisely this emphasis on functional literacy in post-Reformation England that had begun benefiting an increasing number of women across the social spectrum.

The focus on functional skills imparted through seventeenth century education and consequent de-emphasis on humanistic learning is illustrated through Margaret Cavendish's proclamation in *The World's Olio* in 1655:

whereas in nature we have as clear an understanding as men, if we were bred in schools to mature our brains, and to mature our understandings, that we might bring forth the fruits of knowledge.⁹⁵

In addition she declared in *The philosophical and physical opinions* (1655) that women were:

kept like birds in cages to hop up and down in our houses,...we are shut out of all power and authority, by reason we are never

⁹³ Baldassarre Castiglione, *The courtier of Count Baldessar Castilio diuided into foure bookes. Very necessary and profitable for yonge gentilmen and gentilwomen abiding in court, palaice or place, done into English by Thomas Hoby* (London, 1561).

⁹⁴ Lawrence Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 203-4.

⁹⁵ Margaret Cavendish, *The worlds olio* (London, 1655), The Preface. Also Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity* (London, 1988), p. 191.

employed either in civil or martial affairs, our counsels are despised, and laughed at, the best of our actions are trodden down with scorn, by the overweening conceit men have of themselves and through despisement of us.⁹⁶

Almost identical opinions were shared by the other educated ladies of the seventeenth century, such as Mary Astell, Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn, all of whom will be discussed in greater detail below. Thus intellectual women of the time not only recognized the change in the focus of education available to their sex, but also voiced their opinions against the male domination of 'pure learning'.

Noblewomen were given the basic knowledge of English, French and the social accomplishments. While her brothers had tutors to teach them all the secular subjects, the education of Mary Boyle (later Mary Rich, 1624-1673), daughter of Richard Boyle, first Earl of Cork, and her sisters revolved around religion and civility and all the normal female accomplishments that were regarded as integral to a gentlewoman's breeding.⁹⁷ The handful of seventeenth-century women learned in the classical languages and philosophy, such as Mary Carleton and Viscountess Anne Finch were also at times discouraged. For instance, Anne Finch's brother's tutor and philosopher, Henry More, advised her thus:

Madam...you would do well to forbear wholly from any the labour of the brain, and pass away the time with the greater ease and content you can contrive...to desire your ladyship to forbear reading anything that has any considerable difficulty in it, though your head permit it⁹⁸

Therefore, even those women who had managed to obtain an education incorporating the classical languages and sciences were seen as lacking the essential learning of good housewifery which had, by the seventeenth century overshadowed the former. When a 'learned maid' who could speak and write

⁹⁶ Margaret Cavendish, *The philosophical and physical opinions written by Her Excellency the Lady Marchionesse of Newcastle, To the Two Universities* (London, 1655).

⁹⁷ Sara Mendelson, *Mental World of Stuart Women*, pp. 65-6.

⁹⁸ Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity*, p. 192-4. Not only was male-orientated education discouraged, but it was also considered as an illness by some men. See N.H. Keeble, *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-century Woman*, p. 46.

Latin, Greek and Hebrew was presented before James I, he remained unimpressed asking, 'but can she spin?'

Some women were in agreement with the education imparted to their sex. For instance, Elizabeth Jocelin believed that education could be beneficial only to wise and virtuous women since education without wisdom would lead to ruin rather than improvement. She had informed her husband in 1622 as to the kind of education she desired for her unborn child if it were a girl and in the event that she died in childbirth:

I desire her bringing up may be learning the Bible as my sisters do, good housewifery, writing and good work; other learning a woman need not.⁹⁹

Consequently, the discrepancy between the sexes became more pronounced in the educational sphere and reiterated female inferiority.¹⁰⁰

Women from the middle class were either taught by their mothers or sent to the houses of other relatives, in which case their education depended entirely on the extent of knowledge their mothers or relatives possessed. In some cases, they were sent to schools, which specialised in the accomplishments mentioned above.¹⁰¹ However at times the skills of some highly-educated female teachers went unappreciated as Elizabeth Elstob (1683-1756), the author of the first grammar of Anglo-Saxon, published in 1715, proclaimed:

If I would teach to make Artificial flowers, a bit of Tapestry and the like, I should get more than I shall by instilling the Principles of Religion and Virtue, or by improving the Minds of Young Ladies, for those are things little regarded.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Jocelin, Elizabeth *The Mother's Legacie to her Unborn Childe* (London, 1624), B6, B6v.

¹⁰⁰ Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, p. 158, 204-5, 346-7. Also see Elaine Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, p. 273 and Patricia Crawford, 'Women's Published Writings, 1600-1700', in Mary Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society*, p. 214, 215. Also Lawrence Stone (ed.), *Schooling and society: studies in the history of education* (London, 1977).

¹⁰¹ Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 192-4.

¹⁰² Mary Astell, *Some Reflections Upon Marriage* (London, 1700), Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 324.

The tutor of Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Charles I, Bathsua Makin (1600-1675), founded a school for girls in 1673, which not only continued the traditional curriculum, but also introduced subjects such as classical and modern languages, mathematics and the sciences, so as to enable their application in the dispensation of traditional responsibilities as well.¹⁰³ Therefore, although there did appear to be a drive towards broadening its scope in the eighteenth century, female education still lacked the richness and intellectual flavour that it had acquired in the first half of the sixteenth century.¹⁰⁴ Lady Wortley Montagu in 1710 was still critical of the education that women received – ‘whose birth and leisure only serve to render them the most useless and most worthless part of creation.’ Almost at around the same time (in 1706), Mary Astell observed the detrimental impact of insufficient female education on the companionate marriage;

How can a man respect his wife when he has a contemptible opinion of her and her sex...so that folly and a woman are equivalent terms with him?.¹⁰⁵

Among the lower class and the poor, the lack of female education was even more conspicuous amongst the artisans, farmers and labouring poor. In general, educating the poor masses was considered as ‘intrinsically risky’¹⁰⁶ and therefore we can assume that the larger proportion of those who did receive education within this social stratum were male. The education of women was seen as ‘superfluous’ and the labouring poor could not contemplate educating their daughters since they very rarely possessed the resources to even educate their sons, which would have been their priority. Besides, poor women often lacked the opportunity for education, which they had to trade at an early age for domestic service.¹⁰⁷ Amongst the vast majority of religious-minded families in which mothers were literate, female children were often taught to read the Bible by their mothers at a very early age so as to instil in them similar Christian ideals. Therefore, the ability of women to read

¹⁰³ Bathsua Makin, *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen*, 1673 (The Augustan Reprint Society Publication Number 202 published in 1980).

¹⁰⁴ Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 343-4. p. 354.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 345.

¹⁰⁶ Sharpe, *Early Modern England*, pp. 278-9.

¹⁰⁷ Patricia Crawford, ‘From the Woman’s View’ in *Exploring Women’s Past*, pp. 50-51.

was often linked with the acquisition of religious learning. After the mid seventeenth century, an increasing number of charity schools were established which enabled women to benefit from a more functional education.¹⁰⁸

As Mendelson states, the end of the seventeenth century witnessed the realisation that it was indeed the lack of education as opposed to women's nature that had placed them at a disadvantage. Although in specific terms, the education imparted to elite women may have altered in its focus and content, the formal education of women on the whole appears to have become more functional and widespread as the seventeenth century advanced, with the awareness of the need for a good intellectual curriculum being recognized as the way forward as opposed to household skills and informal education.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, a glance back at the pure humanistic learning that some elite women obtained in the early sixteenth century provided a motivating factor for intellectually-inclined women of the seventeenth century who were proactively establishing educational institutions of a higher calibre.

Ottoman Empire:-

All prospective concubines or slave girls for the Sultan were purchased and groomed in the harem school with this purpose in mind.¹¹⁰ In the event that they went unnoticed by the Sultan for an extended period of time, they might acquire a prestigious position in the administration of the harem and/or be given in marriage to a *paşa* or influential individual of the day. Such women were viewed as desirable future spouses on account of their grooming, training and education in the leading institution of the Empire.¹¹¹

In the fifteenth century, Angiolello, one of the pages, also trained in the palace, described the training imparted to the women of the harem and stated:

'(T)he most senior (women), who are trained, teach the

¹⁰⁸ Laurence, *Women in England*, pp. 167-71.

¹⁰⁹ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 252.

¹¹⁰ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 12, 139-43.

¹¹¹ Mansel, *Constantinople*, pp. 96-7 and Barnette Miller, *Beyond the Sublime Porte*, p. 93.

new and unrefined to speak and read and instruct them in the Muhammadan law, and also teach them to sew and embroider, and to play the harp and to sing, and instruct them in all their ceremonies and customs, to the degree that (these girls) have the inclination to learn.¹¹²

Bobovi in the seventeenth century also mentioned similar skills for which the women of the harem were trained, particularly needlework and gold embroidery, which occupied a major part of their leisure hours.¹¹³ Therefore, the type of training provided in the harem school over the centuries appeared to have not altered much perhaps due to the fact that it was imparted with a specific purpose in mind.¹¹⁴ At this point it should be noted that the specifics of the formal curriculum that constituted female education within the Imperial Harem remains unknown apart from the certainty of religious education. It appears to be clear that training women in the intricate workings of the harem and in climbing the hierarchical ladder was foremost, and if so, it is a striking distinction between the manner in which women were trained and educated in the English courtly circles where a good formal education generally tended to form a significant part of a woman's upbringing.

The segregation of women also had an impact on the medium through which female education was imparted and its content. The primary medium of education was the home where women were taught by their fathers, brothers or husbands, and the older ladies of the household, through whom they acquired much of their knowledge of political affairs as well.¹¹⁵ Although the seclusion of aristocratic women was practised, not only because Islam discouraged the mixing of the sexes in public, but also on grounds of social status, they were permitted to attend public sessions or discourses in the mosques without the permission or accompaniment of male family members. They were however, not permitted to attend public educational institutions.

¹¹² Taken from Giovanni Maria Angiolello, *Historia Turchesca, (1300-1514)*, edited by I. Ursu (Bucharest, 1909), p. 128. Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 140-1.

¹¹³ Taken from Alberto Bobovius, *Memoire sur les Turcs* (Harvard University), Houghton Library MS Fr 103. Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 141.

¹¹⁴ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 139-43.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 270.

There is evidence of women holding classes for the purpose of imparting religious education to girls as a means of livelihood, as a case in the 1540 court register reveals. A case was brought against one Hacıye Sabah who had employed Ibrahim to impart religious instruction to classes of women. However, the presence of Ibrahim along with two of his own male pupils created a stir on the grounds of the conscious intermingling of the sexes. Hacıye Sabah and Ibrahim were exiled from the town of Aintab where they had been resident on the basis that 'what she has done is against the law and beyond reason', despite her argument that the two pupils were of pre-pubescent age.¹¹⁶

As in England, the study of religion and religious works as well as poetry were the main subjects of female learning, the latter becoming increasingly popular in the eighteenth century in particular. Some women who had the advantage of an educated and intellectual background benefited from the high degree of knowledge imparted to them by their fathers and husbands such as the sister of the author Seyyid Hasan of Istanbul (whose name is not known)¹¹⁷ and Piri Hanim¹¹⁸ in the seventeenth century and Asiye Hatun¹¹⁹ in the eighteenth century.

Although Goodwin states that in most villages both men and women suffered from the impoverishment of the mind on account of the non-existence of schools, Ian Dengler, through *Les Observations de plusieurs singularitez et choses memorables* (1554) of the French traveller Pierre Belon, notes the converse. According to Belon's reports almost every village had a school and there is also incidence of women being employed as teachers. This indicates therefore, that formal education was not an entirely alien concept in the villages where women were concerned, although it is not clear whether these

¹¹⁶ Leslie Peirce, 'Seniority, Sexuality and Social Order: The Vocabulary of Gender in early modern Ottoman Society' in Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire* (New York, 1997), pp. 192, 193. For a detailed look at law suits initiated by women in Aintab between 1540 and 1541 see Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley, 2003).

¹¹⁷ Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 114.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115-6.

teachers were in fact, inhabitants of those villages or whether they belonged to a more privileged class which was possibly more educationally-inclined.¹²⁰

It is difficult to formulate a concrete comparison of female education in England and the Ottoman Empire on account of the thin evidence on the latter. From the existent evidence however, the type of education imparted to upper and middle class women appears to be of a formal and functional nature including religious knowledge, whereas in the Ottoman Empire, at least in the Imperial Harem, the emphasis appeared to be on specific training with the aim of surviving within the harem network rather than of a more functional nature. Religion however seems to have been a common subject for women in both regions. The distinction was that women would presumably have had to be proficient in Arabic and Turkish in the first instance since Arabic was the language of religion and Turkish, the language of everyday use. Unlike post-Reformation England, where the vernacularisation of the Bible had done away with Latin as the language of religion, in Muslim societies reading, understanding and reciting the Qur'an in its original language was necessary. The reading of Arabic and the Qur'an would presumably have formed the core of the religious training for women of the Imperial Harem, who were mainly converts to Islam, and for whom this religious education would prove most beneficial in their potential roles as *hasekis* or *valide sultans*, wishing to project a pious public image.

3.b) Representation of women in literature:-

England:-

In attempting to investigate the manner in which women were represented during our period of study, and the extent to which depictions of them changed over time, the discussion here begins with the portrayal of women in some of Shakespeare's works in general, and in *The Taming of the Shrew* in

¹²⁰ Ian C. Dengler, 'Turkish Women in the Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age' in Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (eds), *Women in the Muslim World* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 213.

particular. This is followed by a discussion of the representation of women in romances and in Restoration drama.

Shakespeare's plays portray women in varying degrees of strength and importance. For instance in *The Merchant of Venice*, it is Portia who saves the day with her wit, thereby proving herself to be undoubtedly superior in intellect to her male counterparts. However, at the same time, in keeping with the attitude of the age, she realises that she will not achieve her aim and make her argument hold water as a female lawyer, and therefore must alter her apparel and guise accordingly. At all times though, the reader can sense the underlying sense of loyalty and obedience on her part towards her husband, and as the story culminates, she readily discards her disguise and willingly slips back into her wifely role.¹²¹ On the other hand, Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* laments the inequality of the sexes, and is determined not to submit her liberty in matrimony to a dominating husband. She, without the aid of a male disguise, proves an equal match in wit and intelligence to Benedick, who falls in love with her.¹²²

According to Valerie Traub, the clash of patriarchal models of society and actual practise was an element depicted in Shakespeare's writings.¹²³ This was most clearly represented in *The Taming of the Shrew* which is a perfect example of the ideal behaviour of women towards their husbands. It openly scorns the disobedient and almost rebellious attitude of Katharine towards her father, Baptista, and husband, Petruchio, and applauds the latter's contradictory cruelty dressed in the superficial guise of kindness. The play proved to be a jocular depiction of a recusant female character, Katharine, who is brought back on to the straight and narrow so to speak, in keeping with the prescribed Christian virtues of silence and obedience.¹²⁴

¹²¹ William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, William Baker and Brian Vickers (eds) (New York, 2005).

¹²² William Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, F.H. Mares (ed.) (Cambridge, 2003).

¹²³ Valerie Traub, 'Gender and Sexuality in Shakespeare', in Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 130.

¹²⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Brian Morris (ed.), (London, 1981), p. 211, 295-7.

From almost the outset, Katharine is described in no less negative a term than 'devil' by her father. In his first meeting with his future wife, Petruchio proclaims to her:

Thou must be married to no man but me;
For I am he am born to tame you Kate,
And bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate
Conformable as other household Kates.¹²⁵

After they are married he emphasizes his possession over her and groups her along with all his other material possessions.¹²⁶

It is interesting how Petruchio's method of 'taming' involves starving his wife, and depriving her of fine attire and other comforts, which to some would appear as external factors not possessing the ability to permanently alter Katharine's inherent 'shrew-like' nature. This therefore implies that her inherent shrew-like nature was in fact superficial which could be easily discarded through equally superficial means to reveal the inherent virtuousness. Katharine realises her past folly and provides advice to all recusant women not to stray from their duties towards their husbands.

Therefore when Petruchio commands her thus,

'Katharine, I charge thee, tell these headstrong women

What duty they do owe their lords and husbands', she responds in the following manner:

Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,...
And when she is froward, peevish, sullen, sour,
And not obedient to his honest will,
What is she but a foul contending rebel
And graceless traitor to her loving lord?
I am ashamed that women are so simple
To offer war where they should kneel for peace;
Or seek for rule, supremacy and sway,
When they are bound to serve, love and obey....

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 211.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 295-97.

'I will be master of what is mine own:
She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house,
My household stuff, my field, my barn,
My horse, my ox, my ass, my any thing;...'
'Thus have I politicly begun my reign.' (Act 3 Scene II)

place your hands below your husband's foot:
In token of which duty, if he please,
My hand is ready; may it do him ease.¹²⁷

Women's normative social roles and the actual practice of these roles are well portrayed in Shakespeare's depiction of women. As Traub points out, conflict constitutes the core of the action in his works and therefore involves the breakdown of the prescribed social order. This is at times expressed through defiant and dominant women. Consequently, the grand finale of *The Taming of the Shrew* involves the re-establishment of patriarchal authority and the reversion of women to their assigned normative posts. In actual fact, Katharine's strong character is perhaps a depiction of what, for some, may have been the reality that existed at the time. Similarly, the exclusive association of women to their marital status is also an element portrayed in *As You Like It* where women's lives consist of only three stages of 'maid, wife, and widow', whereas men adopt seven different roles through the span of their lives, all of which are distinctive.¹²⁸ At the same time, his female characters do not always follow the accepted social roles within the marriage context and neither are they always depicted as only 'maid', wife and widow'. It is noteworthy that in Shakespeare's plays women who preferred to remain outside the marital sphere were either prostitutes or then associated with women of ill repute. Ironically, the only economically independent unmarried women in Shakespeare are prostitutes who run their own establishments.¹²⁹ The undoubted fact however remained that Shakespeare successfully and realistically portrayed female characters in all their myriad forms and complexities ranging across the social spectrum, whether it be a highly complex Lady Macbeth, an independent-minded Katharine, a witty and intelligent Portia or a quintessential fair maiden in the form of Rosalind.

The strength of the female character being her submission to her 'master', is a quality glorified not only in *The Taming of the Shrew*, but also by authors of

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 295-97.

¹²⁸ Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, in Agnes Latham (ed.), *The Arden Shakespeare Series* (London 1975), pp. 56-7, 99-100.

¹²⁹ Valerie Traub, 'Gender and Sexuality in Shakespeare', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, p. 131, 132-3, 136. Also see Judith Cook, *Women in Shakespeare* (London, 1980), pp. 6, 13

Elizabethan romances. These romances were written largely by male authors for the female reader. The reason for this was that it was women who were frivolous enough to read and enjoy romances, and therefore, many of these romances were dedicated to women, since men were considered far superior intellectually and would not waste their time over such trivialities. However, the double standards, as is usually the case, are brought to the fore in this case as well; for romance writing on the part of women was looked down upon. It was considered too base and immoral for a woman to pen a romantic story,¹³⁰ even though they were targeted as the main readers, whereas for men, it was a perfectly acceptable and respectable activity. The heroines of these romances were naturally therefore the main protagonists, which signified their importance. Although the heroine is almost always depicted as a strong character, as mentioned earlier, her strength lies in her silence and yielding nature to cruelty on the part of the important male figure she is associated with.

It would be useful at this juncture to contemplate the representation of women in the genre of Restoration drama by male playwrights. Restoration drama becomes all the more fascinating since, unlike Shakespearian times when female roles were enacted by young boys, the latter years of the seventeenth century witnessed the emergence of the first English actresses. This, coupled with the strong Continental influence on Restoration theatre partly the result of the exile imposed by the Interregnum on royalists, resulted in a theatre and operatic drama which were based on Continental themes and styles along with a revival of Elizabethan and Stuart plays.¹³¹ Female roles continued to embody the gender complexities that prevailed but with the interesting and novel dimension of these roles being performed in the flesh by women. Although, according to Harold Weber, 'In practical terms the freedom women gained to play themselves on stage was to a large extent the freedom to play the whore', Restoration drama portrayed various facets of both male and

¹³⁰ For instance see Thomas Powell, *Tom of All Trades. Or the Plaine Path-way to Preferment* (1631), p. 47 for his opinion on women and romances.

¹³¹ Richard Bevis, *English Drama: Restoration and Eighteenth Century, 1660-1789* (London, 1988), p. 2.

female characters, whether it be the 'rake hero' and virtuous heroine or the fops, lechers and the loose-moral or unsophisticated woman.¹³²

In general terms actresses in Restoration comedies written by Restoration playwrights such as William Whycherley's (1640-1716) *The Country Wife* (1675) and *The Plain-dealer* (1676), Thomas Southerne's (1660-1746) *Sir Anthony Love* (1690) or William Congreve's (1670-1729) *Love for Love* (1695), portrayed either the silent virtuous woman, or a woman who adopted a male identity, (referred to as 'breeches roles') only to abandon it at the end and 'dwindle into a wife'.¹³³ In situations where a passionate woman boldly stepped into male domain roles, she usually faced the unpleasant consequences of trespassing on male territory.¹³⁴ Alternatively, the sexuality of the actresses was exploited with women being portrayed in what came to be known as 'couch scenes'. Restoration tragedies such as John Dryden's (1631-1700) *All for Love* (1678) illustrated the complexities of the female character, portraying on the one hand, the ideal Roman wife of Mark Anthony, Octavia, and on the other, the foreign and therefore passionate Cleopatra who looks upon the state of marriage with disdain and the ideal wife as 'dull'. Despite this, she aspires towards acquiring the status of Anthony's wife after death, thereby perhaps acknowledging social propriety albeit in another context.¹³⁵

An interesting sub-genre of Restoration drama with an inter-cultural flavour appeared more frequently as interactions between England and the Levant increased. Images of the harem and the sultan's seraglio which had permeated into English writing in the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries through Shakespeare's *King Lear*¹³⁶ for instance, Philip Massinger's

¹³² Harold Weber, *The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations of Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-century England* (Wisconsin, 1986), p. 152.

¹³³ William Congreve, *The Way of the World* (Montana, 2004), p. 81.

¹³⁴ Elizabeth Howe, *First English Actresses: women and Drama* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 37, 41-4, 49-52, 56-64. Also see Pat Gill, 'Gender, Sexuality and Marriage', in Deborah Payne Fisk (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 194-205.

¹³⁵ John Dryden, *All for Love, or the World Well Lost* (1678).

¹³⁶ In *King Lear* Edgar boasts by saying that he had 'in women, out-paramoured the Turk.'

The Renegado (1623)¹³⁷ and Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turned Turk* (1612), continued through the Restoration plays of writers such as Jean Racine.

Jean Racine's *Bajazet* (1672) is an illustration of not only the speed with which fortunes could change for women of the harem, but also echoes in parts the career of Roxelana (the favourite of Süleyman the Magnificent) through the primary female protagonist Roxane¹³⁸. In general, focusing on the stereotype of the lustful Turk additionally gave English playwrights the ideal tool whereby they could satisfy universal male desires through the medium of this widely accepted notion rather than that of lustful Englishmen and women, which may not have been well received by an English audience. Furthermore, such cross-cultural plays often depicted not only the salvation of Turkish women when they converted to Christianity in order to marry their Christian lovers as in Philip Massinger's *Renegado*, but also warned against the dangers of Christians converting to Islam in order to marry Turkish women as in Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turned Turk*.¹³⁹

Ottoman Empire:

Because of the inherent difficulty of Ottoman Turkish and lack of accurate translations, Ottoman literature has not been critically read until very recently in the Western world. E.J.W. Gibb suggests that another reason for the Western neglect of the activities of the Ottomans in the artistic and literary fields could be attributed to the fact that they posed as a real threat to

¹³⁷ The sources for this play are believed to be Cervantes's account of life in Algiers, William Biddulph's *The Travels of Certain Englishmen into Africa, Troy, Bithynia, Thracia, and to the Black Sea*, Theophilus Lavender (ed.) (1609), George Sandys' *Relation of a Journey begun An. Dom. 1610, 1615*, and Richard Knolles' *General History of the Turks*, 1603. See Philip Edwards and Colin Gibson (eds), *The Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger*, vol. II (Oxford, 1976), p. 2.

¹³⁸ Jean Racine, *Bajazet*, edited with an introduction and analysis by Margaret M. McGowan (London, 1968). Ruth Yeazell, *Harems of the Mind*, pp. 64-5, 161, 187, 191. *Almyna* was based on the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* (1706-21), the English translation of Antoine Gannad's *Mille et une Nuits* (17-04-17), p. 188.

¹³⁹ Robert Daborne, *A Christian Turn'd Turke* (Amsterdam, 1973).

Western European lands and its culture.¹⁴⁰ Although writers flourished in every field of literary activity, Ottoman poets shine through as the most gifted.

The History of the Forty Viziers came to western Ottoman society after passing through Iran.¹⁴¹ It is an unbridled attack on women and it is indicative of male attitudes towards women mainly because of its assumptions even though they are disguised as humour. The Ottoman version of this history was dedicated to Sultan Murad II and dates from the mid-fifteenth century. Forty of the stories were pleas to the sultan in the tale not to behead his sons, while forty others are those of the stepmothers to persuade the sultan to keep his axe sharp. The stories may have been trimmed to suit extreme Ottoman attitudes towards women. They depict male paranoia about the powers of women.

An interesting feature of a story by one of the forty viziers was to do with the Islamic legal requirement of two or more female witnesses as opposed to acting on the word of one woman alone as it was believed that a woman was capable of hatching plots and tricks at the drop of a hat. Therefore Caliph Ömer stated that no man should take the advice of a woman but to do the opposite of what she says. The twelfth vizier reveals women's dishonesty and discusses why men should never confide in women about business or anything else, nor should women ever be allowed to act of their own free will.¹⁴² However, the stories also have subtle implications about dishonesty and sinfulness on the part of men as well since it is difficult to belittle women without also revealing the simultaneous disagreeable conduct of men.¹⁴³

Notions of the impropriety of women's involvement in public and political affairs lingered through the sixteenth century through public denunciations such as that by the mufti Sunullah in 1599 which once again leaned heavily on the *Hadith* which Fatima Mernissi has striven to explore, namely '(A)

¹⁴⁰ E.J.W. Gibb, *Ottoman Poets: translated into English verse in the original forms, with introduction, biographical notices, and notes* (London, 1882), pp. xix – xxiii.

¹⁴¹ Goodwin, *Private World of Ottoman Women*, p. 198.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 198, 200.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 200.

people who entrusts its affairs to a woman will never know prosperity.¹⁴⁴ The Ottoman *ulema* (which consisted solely of men) were active in speech and writing where the establishment of an acceptable code of conduct between the sexes was concerned. The segregation of the sexes was further emphasized through writings such as *The Way of the Prophet Muhammad* by the scholar Birgivi Mehmed Efendi (d. 1573).¹⁴⁵ Deeming conversation between a man and a young woman who were not blood relatives or kinfolk as a sin, this work was adopted as a manual of Ottoman morals.¹⁴⁶

3.c) Women writers:-

England:-

The period under study, particularly the seventeenth century, witnessed significant activity in the field of female authorship, not only in the genres of poetry, non-fictional works and drama, but also in the writing of romances, from which women's exclusion had been encouraged. The translation of male works was looked upon with more approval than the writing of original romances. This is evident in the example of Margaret Tyler, who not only translated the popular Spanish romance, *The First Part of the Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood* in 1578, but also took the opportunity to encourage women to read and write similar romances, both translations and original works. In her prefatory note she clearly states her views thus:

My perswasion hath bene thus, that it is all one for a woman to pen a story, as for a man to addresse his story to a woman.¹⁴⁷

Misogyny, however, was embodied in Joseph Swetnam's satirical text, *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Woman*, written in

¹⁴⁴ See Chapter 1 for details.

¹⁴⁵ Taken from Birgivi Mehmed, *Tarikat-i-Muhammadiye*, Translated by C. Yıldırım (Istanbul, 1981), p. 398. Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, p. 269.

¹⁴⁶ Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 267, 269.

¹⁴⁷ Diego, Ortúñez de Calahorra, *The mirrour of princely deedes and knighthood wherein is shewed the worthinesse of the Knight of the Sunne, and his brother Rosicleer, sonnes to the great Emperour Trebetio: with the strange loue of the beautifull and excellent princesse Briana, and the valiant actes of other noble princes and knightes. Now newly translated out of Spanish into our vulgar English tongue, by M.T.* (London, 1578), 'To the Reader'.

1615.¹⁴⁸ While Swetnam himself in the outset in 'Neither to the best nor yet to the worst, but to the common sort of Women' refers to women as 'vermin', 'wasps' and 'necessary evils',¹⁴⁹ his character Misogynous exemplifies the evils that embody women thus: women's faults are so many, that:

if all the world were paper, and all the sea inke, and all the trees and plants were pens, and euery man in the world were a writer, yet were they not able with all their labour and cunning, to set downe all the crafty deceits of women.¹⁵⁰

Although a popular work on account of its successive editions, largely viewed as a jocular scenario at the expense of women filled with familiar clichés, jokes and arguments, some women were not amused and lashed out in retaliation. Rachel Speght's assault on Swetnam and his work, titled *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (1617)¹⁵¹ was rather uncharacteristic of preceding works by women, although it is characteristic of writings that constituted the genre of the defence of women. While referring to him as a 'pestiferous enemy' and his writings as 'being the very embleme of a monster', she referred to his work as an 'illiterate Pamphlet'¹⁵² and severely criticized his blatant misuse of Scriptures.¹⁵³

Another vocal defender of women was Ester Sowerham (pseudo.), the body of whose work was the arraignment of Joseph Swetnam titled *Ester Hath Hang'd Haman* (1617).¹⁵⁴ The core of her argument is that men lie at the basis of all evil and therefore they are also the instigators of women's evil deeds. Misogynistic rhetoric was fabricated by men in the absence of a more useful occupation. The interesting feature of her scathing attack on men was that

¹⁴⁸ Joseph Swetnam, *The araignment of leuud, idle, froward, and vnconstant women or the vanitie of them, choose you whether: with a commendation of wise, vertuous and honest women : pleasant for married men, profitable for young men, and hurtfull to none* (London, 1615).

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, A2i, A2ii.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, Chapter 1 p. B, p. 33. Valerie Wayne, 'The Death of the Author: Anonymity's Allies and Swetnam the Woman-hater', in Susan Frye and Karen Robertson (eds), *Maids and Mistresses, Courtiers and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), p. 224. Taken from Swetnam I.ii 151-8. Diane Purkiss, 'Material Girls: The Seventeenth-Century Woman Debate', in Brant and Purkiss (eds), *Women, Texts and Histories*, pp. 73-4. Swetnam likens a beautiful woman to a jewel and says that 'a beautiful woman is for the most part costly,...'.

¹⁵¹ Rachel Speght, *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (London, 1617)

¹⁵² *Ibid*, Title page, The Epistle Dedicatorie pp. 2 and 3.

¹⁵³ Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, p. 254.

¹⁵⁴ Ester Sowerham, *Ester Hath Hang'd Haman* (London, 1617), pp. 34, 43.

she accepted the fact that women should still be obedient to them once they had rectified their ill characteristics. Affirming women's virtue is a pre-requisite to their portrayal as good judges in Sowerham's *Arraignment*. Reason and Experience constitute the two judges in her arraignment while Conscience is the prosecutor. She effectively described the jury as Swetnam's five senses and the seven deadly sins.¹⁵⁵ *Swetnam the Woman-hater Arraigned by Women* written by an anonymous author in 1618 was yet another reactive text to Swetnam's original attack. In this play, it was Swetnam who is tried for his statements against women.¹⁵⁶ The above vocalization and implementation of women's defences were highly significant since it emphasized the likelihood that women had reached the end of their tether and would no longer silently forebear misogyny. In this manner they skilfully expressed their opinions and interpretations of Christian virtues. While vocalizing their ideas within the accepted framework of Christian virtues, they simultaneously publicly expressed their individual perception of those virtues. It is also probable that they felt that this technique would still provide the necessary appeal in a patriarchal environment and ensure the reading of their works despite their inherent rebellious character.

Silence was equated with modesty and since modesty was equated with chastity, a woman who spoke out or wrote was perceived as unchaste and dishonourable. Therefore, many women who wrote apologized for their violation of modesty. In light of male criticism that many of them received, they often apologized for the deficiencies in their writings by justifying them as works by the weaker and inferior sex. Some women published anonymously or by disguising their female identity so as to gain an audience, while others avoided criticism by addressing their works only to other women. Women also had to at times contend with criticism from female quarters which perceived female writing as an infringement on male prerogative and urged them to focus on their domestic duties instead. For instance in Anne Finch's words:

Alas! A woman the attempts the pen,

¹⁵⁵ Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, p. 262.

¹⁵⁶ Valerie Wayne, 'The Death of the Author', in *Maids and Mistresses*, p. 233.

Such an intruder on the rights of men.¹⁵⁷

Furthermore, Margaret Cavendish was urged to abandon her pen:

Work *Lady* work, let writing *Books* alone,
For surely wiser *Women* nere wrote one.¹⁵⁸

Women's writings were often ascribed to other male authors or on account of cataloguing practices faded into oblivion.

Women's publications, both first and subsequent editions, increased dramatically from the period of the Civil War onwards, many of which were petitions by women for their rights. Male admirers or relatives often helped women in publishing their works. For example, the message of the illiterate and poor prophetess Elinor Channel (fl. 1654), *A message from God [by a dumb woman] to his highness the lord protector* (London 1654), was published by Arise Evans.¹⁵⁹ She is said to have been woken up one night by 'a Blow given her upon the heart' and 'an audible voice' commanded her to report her royalist message to the Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell. She met Arise Evans in London who wrote down her oral message calling for the restoration of Charles II.¹⁶⁰ Other publications like the Fifth Monarchist prophetess Anna Trapnell's 1654 account of her twelve-day trance, *Anna Trapnell's Report and Plea*,¹⁶¹ worried the Protectorate greatly, and eventually resulted in her arrest. According to Catherine Gill, although prophetic writings by Quaker women flourished during the Civil War and Interregnum years, they declined in the 1680s. Testimonies prior to death and memorialising writings had replaced those of prophecies and more practical literature outlining the

¹⁵⁷ Myra Reynolds (ed.), *The Poems of Anne, Countess of Winchilsea* (Chicago, 1903), p. 4.

¹⁵⁸ Crawford, 'Women's Published Writings' in *Women in English Society*, pp. 214-5, 216, 219, 220.

¹⁵⁹ Elinor Channel, *A message from God, by a dumb woman to his Highness the Lord Protector: together with a word of advice to the Commons of England and Wales, for the electing of a Parliament* (London, 1654).

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1. Also see Thomas N. Corns, 'Channel, Elinor (fl. 1654)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/69784>, accessed 29 Sept 2006; and Patricia Crawford, 'Women's Published Writings' in *Women in English Society*, pp. 211, 212-3, 214, 231; and Patricia Crawford, 'From the Woman's View' in *Exploring Women's Past*, p. 76.

¹⁶¹ Anna Trapnell, *Anna Trapnell's Report and Plea* (London, 1654). See Elspeth Graham (ed.), *Her Own Life*, pp. 71-84.

duties of women in separate women's meetings became more evident, as was the notion that the domestic sphere was the suitable place for women.¹⁶²

Another genre of female writings that emerged in the early modern period was that of mother's advice manuals. While these legitimised their writing within the domestic sphere as women (wives and mothers) under male authority penning their works for the benefit of their own children, the very act of writing these manuals brought their authors into the public eye. The authors justified their breach of St. Paul's teaching of silence in Church by the overpowering need as Christians to preach the word of God to their children and thereby work towards the salvation of their children's souls.¹⁶³ This genre of writing had been facilitated by humanist and reformist advocacy of the concept of the 'new mother', who, according to Protestant belief was given an equal responsibility for the pious nurturing and raising of children. This elevated mothers to the status of 'learned, pious and responsible' women, with not only nurturing responsibilities, but also with the right to 'self-development'.¹⁶⁴

Elizabeth Grymston's (1563-1603) *Miscelanea, Meditations, Memoratives*,¹⁶⁵ Dorothy Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing* (1616)¹⁶⁶ and Elizabeth Jocelin's *The Mother's Legacie to her Unborne Childe* (1624), are significant examples in this sphere.¹⁶⁷ Beilin suggests that Grymston achieves the union of two strains of female authorship through her work, namely the desire to break away from the limiting influences of domesticity through intellectual advancement and to create an appropriate female persona through which this knowledge could be expressed.¹⁶⁸ Writing with the purpose to strive towards the salvation of their children was also the means by which female authors could reconcile the

¹⁶² Catherine Gill, *Women in the Seventeenth-century Quaker Community: a Literary Study of Political Identities, 1650-1700* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 3, 148

¹⁶³ Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, pp. 266-67.

¹⁶⁴ Betty Travitsky, *The Paradise of Women*, p. 49.

¹⁶⁵ Elizabeth Grymston, *Miscelanea, Meditations, Memoratives* (London, 1604).

¹⁶⁶ Dorothy Leigh, *The mother[s] blessing: or, The godly counsaile of a gentle-woman, not long since deceased, left behind for her children contayning many good exhortations, and godly admonitions profitable for all parents, to leaue as [l]egacy to their children* (London, 1621).

¹⁶⁷ Elizabeth Jocelin, *The Mother's Legacie to her Unborne Childe* (London, 1624).

¹⁶⁸ Elizabeth Grymston, *Miscelanea, Meditations, Memoratives*, A3. Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, pp. 267-69.

advocated silence of women with the need to express their views. As suggested by Beilin, feminine virtue for the writers discussed above was synonymous with Christian virtue.¹⁶⁹ Kristen Poole in her discussion of Leigh and Jocelin's works in terms of their public and private appeal states that while Leigh's manual showed more overt inclinations towards a public audience, Jocelin's work was written in seclusion with no written intentions of publication for a wider audience. However, as Poole suggests, the image of the silent Christian virtuous woman writing in seclusion for a private purpose, presented just the ideal image of the seventeenth-century woman that male manuals of the ideal woman, such as those by Gervase Markham and William Gouge for instance, had portrayed and therefore accelerated the cause for the publication of her work as not only a useful advice manual but also as a role model for other women.¹⁷⁰ Mother's manual authors wrote within the strictly private and therefore accepted sphere of domesticity, it was just these traits in their work that resulted in their publication and thereby made the transition from the private to the public sphere.

Seventeenth-century female authorship is vast and it is impractical to include every author in this study. Nevertheless, some of the famous female writers of the early modern period will be discussed briefly in an attempt to give an idea of the subjects that women were passionate about and the means by which they brought forth their views. Seventeenth-century female writers had the precedent of professional writers such as Isabella Whitney to look back on. Through her influential works such as *The Copy of a Letter* (1567) and *A Sweet Nosegay* (1573), she reflected her determination to continue writing independent of her domestic duties. In her words: 'til some household cares me tie, /My books and pen I will apply'.¹⁷¹ The works of Mary Cary (fl. 1621), Mary Wroth (1587-1651), Margaret Cavendish (1623-1673), Aphra Behn (1640-1689) and Mary Astell (1668-1731) could be classified as 'utopian'

¹⁶⁹ Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, pp. 275, 280, 281-2.

¹⁷⁰ Kristen Poole, ' "The Fittest Closet for all Goodness": Authorial Strategies of Jacobean Mother's Manuals', in *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, no. 35 (1995), pp.69-88.

¹⁷¹ Isabella Whitney, 'To Her Sister Misteris A.B.,' in *A Sweet Nosegay, Or pleasant Posye: contayning a hundred and ten Phylosophicall Flowers*, ed. Richard J. Panofsky (1573; reprint, New York, 1982), D2.

writing. While the works of Mary Wroth, Margaret Cavendish and Aphra Behn were fictional, those of Mary Cary and Mary Astell specialized in the non-fictional genre which encouraged reforms.

One of the foremost female authors was Lady Mary Wroth, the sister of Sir Philip Sidney. Her familial connections proved to be an advantage and she explored the world of romance writing with *Urania*.¹⁷² She concerned herself with the state of educational depravity that women had to bear, through her protagonist Urania. At the outset of the text, 'faire' Urania, a shepherdess laments the misfortune that most women faced, namely the lack of 'knowledge':

of any miserie that can befall woman,... Can there be any neare
the unhappinesse of being ignorant...?¹⁷³

Even though she acknowledged men as the cause for women's suffering, she did not point fingers at them – instead she provided an explanation for their behaviour:

take heed brave Lady, trust not too much; for believe
it, the kindest, lovingest, passionatest, worthiest, lovliest,
valliantest, sweetest and best man, will, and must change,
not that he, it may bee, doth it purposely, but tis their naturall
infirmities, and cannot be helped.¹⁷⁴

She based her main protagonist on Queen Elizabeth who embodied the heroic virtues of chastity and constancy so cherished in a woman. In this respect too, the strength of her female characters were emphasized through their upholding of Christian virtues. Thus, her portrayal of the stoicism and strength of her female characters, which is noticeable through their suffering is similar to that depicted by male authors.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Lady Mary Wroth, *The Countesse of Mountgomeries Urania* (London, 1621).

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 1.

¹⁷⁴ Helen Hackett, "'Yet Tell Me Some Such Fiction': Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania* and the 'Femininity of Romance'", in Brant and Purkiss (eds), *Women, Texts and Histories, 1575-1760* (London, 1992), pp. 50-1, 55.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 63. Also see Amelia Zurcher, *Dancing on a Net": Representation in Lady Mary Wroth's Urania*, unpublished M.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1989. Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, p. 242.

The fictional narrative of Margaret Cavendish expresses the idea of female superiority as the existence of a sort of matriarchy where men are dominated by women. *The Blazing World* portrays an Emperor who is so enamoured by a lady that he not only marries her, but hands over his kingdom to her to govern. The new Empress then is depicted as all-powerful within and without her realm, ready to take up arms against any of her enemies. Although her simile is of an Empire, we can assume that she wished the reader to construe it as society as a whole and the Empress symbolises all the women who should empower themselves with the ability to fight against all those who intentionally impede their intellectual progress. There is an interesting observation prevalent in the text, which however, suggests the covert influence exerted by women within their personal sphere. Through the voice of the Empress' male advisers, we are informed about this fact:

although (women) are not admitted to publick Employments,
yet are they so prevalent with their Husbands and Parents,
that many times by their importunate perswasions, they cause
as much, nay, more mischief secretly, than if they had the
management of publick affairs.¹⁷⁶

Cavendish's aim though is clearly expressed in her letter 'To The Two Most Famous Universities', -

the good Encouragement of our Sex, lest in time we should
grow Irrational as Idiots, by the Dejectedness of our Spirits,
through the Careless Neglects and Despisements of the Mas-
culine Sex to the Female,...for we are Kept like Birds in
Cages, to Hop up and down in our Houses, not Suffer'd to Fly
Abroad. ...Shut out of all Power and Authority, by reason
We are never Employed either in Civil or Martial Affairs.¹⁷⁷

Despite Cavendish's bold images and ideas, the following lines reveal the restrictions and obstacles that many women writers of her time may have had to face. She says that it was her husband who gave her, 'Leave to Publish

¹⁷⁶ Margaret Cavendish, *The description of a new world, called the blazing-world* (London, 1668), p. 18. Kate Lilley, 'Blazing Worlds: Seventeenth-Century Women's Utopian Writing' in Brant and Purkiss (eds), *Women, Texts and Histories, 1575-1760* (London, 1992), pp. 119, 121.

¹⁷⁷ Margaret Cavendish, *The philosophical and physical opinions*, 'To the Two Universities'. Kate Lilley, 'Blazing Worlds' in *Women, Texts and Histories*, p. 127.

them, which is a Favour, few Husbands would grant their Wives; but Your Lordship is an extraordinary Husband.¹⁷⁸

Mary Cary, through *A New and More Exact Mappe of New Jerusalems Glory*, written in 1651, imagined an ideal world where women would have not only equal rights with men, but would also have the all-important opportunity to indulge in higher intellectual activities.¹⁷⁹ Aphra Behn's utopian poem, *The Golden Age* involved the creation of a world where all aspects are favourable and yet again the emphasis was on the self-sufficiency of the women who reside in that world.¹⁸⁰ She was however well-renowned as a Restoration playwright which will be discussed shortly.

Mary Astell also focused on similar utopian ideas of self-government, as she did not desire government over material worldly possessions. In *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of Their True and Greatest Interest*, written in 1694, with a sequel in 1697, Astell provided women with ways in which they could improve their minds.¹⁸¹ She criticised the patriarchal depictions of complying women and posed the following question to all women:

How can you be content to be in the world like Tulips in a Garden,
to make a fine show and be good for nothing.¹⁸²

Mary Astell's vision was that of establishing a kind of 'religious retreat' for both married and unmarried women in which emphasis was not only placed on religious education but also the knowledge of those subjects, the study of which would enhance their mental faculties.¹⁸³ She wrote:

¹⁷⁸ Margaret Cavendish, *Philosophical and physical opinions*, pp. II2r-II2v. Kate Lilley, 'Blazing Worlds' in *Women, Texts and Histories*, p. 128.

¹⁷⁹ Kate Lilley, 'Blazing Worlds', pp. 107-110. See also Jerry Brotton, *Renaissance Bazaar: From the Silk Road to Michelangelo* (Oxford, 2004), p. 213.

¹⁸⁰ Montague Summers, *The Works of Aphra Behn*, 6 vols. (1915; rpt. New York: Phaeton, 1967).

¹⁸¹ Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, Parts I and II*: Edited with Introduction and Notes by Patricia Springburg (London, 1997).

¹⁸² *Ibid*, p. 11.

¹⁸³ Bridget Hill, 'Refuge from Men: The Idea of a Protestant Nunnery' in *Past and Present*, No. 117 (November, 1987), pp. 107-109 for details.

Hither, Ladies, I desire you wou'd aspire, 'tis a noble and becoming Ambition, and to remove such Obstacles as lie in your way is the design of this Paper. We will therefore enquire what it is that stops your flight, that keeps you grovelling here below, like Domitian catching Flies when you should be busied in obtaining Empires.¹⁸⁴

Thus, it would seem that the above-mentioned authors were united in their desire for a world (be it a fictional Empire or a realistic college) which had women at its centre either with or without men. It would however appear that a simple reversal of the patriarchal set-up into a sort of matriarchy was not entirely their intention for they acknowledged male authority by explaining it as did Mary Wroth for instance.

Others were however more forthright and direct in their censure of the extent of male authority. Mary Carleton's texts, not utopian but autobiographical, were a direct assault on the denial of legal equality to women. Texts such as *The Women's Sharpe Revenge* written in 1640 (most likely by a female author) also criticised patriarchy for rendering women weaker than their natural physical weakness. Furthermore, it highlighted the double-standards of their legal status by saying:

all Nations do observe it as a Law, That a Dissolute Life in Men, is not held to be such a Vice as in Women. That let a Report passé of a Woman, True or False, Irreparably she lyeth under Infamy.¹⁸⁵

In addition it stated:

If we (women) be weak by nature, they (men) strive to make us more weak by our nurture, and if in degree of place low, they strive by their policy to keep us more under.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, p. 7. Kate Lilley, 'Blazing Worlds', in *Women, Texts and Histories*, pp. 114, 115.

¹⁸⁵ *The Woman's Sharpe Revenge: or an answer to Sir Seldome Sober that writ those railing pamphlets called the Juniper and Crabtree lectures, &c. Being a sound reply and a full confutation of those bookes: with an apology in this case for the defence of us women. Performed by Mary Tattlewell, and Ioane Hit-him-home, spinsters* (London, 1640), p. 42.

¹⁸⁶ Hero Chalmers, '“The Person I am or What They Made Me To Be”: The Construction of the Female Subject in the Autobiographies of Mary Carleton', in *Women, Texts and Histories*, pp. 177-8. *The Woman's Sharpe Revenge*, p. 42.

Lady Mary Chudleigh was yet another feminist writer of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In 1703, she advised the following in her poem addressed *To The Ladies*:

Wife and servant are the same,
But only differ in the name
When she the word "obey" has said,
And man by law supreme has made,
Fierce as an Eastern Prince he grows
And all his innate rigor shows.
Then but to look, to laugh, or speak
Will the nuptial contract break.
Like mutes she signs alone must make,
And never any freedom take,
But still be governed by a nod
And fear her husband as her God.
Then shun, oh shun that wretched state
And all the fawning flatterers hate.
Value yourselves and men despise:
You must be proud if you'll be wise.¹⁸⁷

The appearance of actresses on the Restoration stage also heralded a new era for female playwrights who not only took up writing as a means of livelihood, but for the first time had their plays enacted publicly. Their work however was still perceived as inferior to that of male playwrights. One of the most influential playwrights of the period as noted above, was Aphra Behn (1640-89) who wrote no less than eighteen plays apart from substantial works of prose and poetry. Others were Mary Pix (1666-1709), Catherine Trotter (1679-1749) and Delarivier Manley (c.1672-1724). Mary Pix and Delarivier Manley also wrote on the popular theme of the barbarous and lustful Turks and the general depiction of Turkish women as helpless objects of pleasure.¹⁸⁸ For instance, in Mary Pix's *Ibrahim the Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks*, Emperor Ibrahim is portrayed as fitting the traditional stereotype of the 'barbarous' and 'lustful' Turk, who ravages his victim, an innocent and unwilling girl from his harem. He is quoted as saying, 'I'll rush thro' all and

¹⁸⁷ Lady Mary Chudleigh, 'To the Ladies' in *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1703) Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 340-1.

¹⁸⁸ Delarivier Manley's *Almyna* has already been discussed in Chapter 2 in the context of women's souls.

seize the trembling prey'.¹⁸⁹ This highlighted the subordination of Ottoman women depicted in the literature of the time.

These playwrights came from professional backgrounds and took to writing as a means of livelihood. Aristocratic playwrights such as Margaret Cavendish along with some other women from the lower social strata such as Katherine Philips, Anne Wharton and Elizabeth Polwhele stayed away from the public enactment of their plays as they did not consider it respectable to be visible in commercial theatre. As Elizabeth Howe states, it was the actresses who had a greater influence on Restoration drama than the women who actually wrote some of it.¹⁹⁰ Although sexual equality in the Restoration theatre was not achieved by the inclusion of actresses, it was no less difficult to achieve in the eighteenth century. However, as Howe suggests, the achievements of the first English actresses should not be underestimated and should be instead perceived as a watershed in the field of women's literary achievements.¹⁹¹

Ottoman Empire:-

Limited primarily to the upper classes of society and requiring a superior education which was also largely their privilege, poetry in the Ottoman Empire was a well-established male tradition with specific metaphors and images which were employed by male poets to describe their beloved. Therefore the audience of such a poet had to be well-versed in the classical tradition. As Gibb states, it appears that the most distinctive feature of Ottoman poetry is

its lack of originality; saving that it differs in what may be called its local colouring, for it is the growth of another clime: it reflects as in a mirror every trait and feature of the poetic art of Persia.¹⁹²

Consequently, the female poet had a difficult path ahead of her for she had to be literate enough to be well-acquainted with the classical tradition of poetry.

¹⁸⁹ Mary Pix, *Ibrahim the Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks* (London, 1696), p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ Howe, p. 17.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 13, 16, 17, 18, 174-6, 177. For details on the lives and works of Aphra Behn, Mary Pix, Delarivier Manley, Katherine Philips and Catherine Trotter see Fidelis Morgan, *The Female Wits: Women Playwrights on the London Stage 1660-1720* (London, 1981), pp. 3-50.

¹⁹² Gibb, *Ottoman Poets* (1882), p. xxxii.

Moreover, she had to make a spectacular and long-lasting impression on the male-dominated poetic circles in order to be included in them and receive an interested audience. The task became more of a challenge bearing in mind the classical framework of metaphors and images which catered primarily to male poets and within which the female poet had to work. For instance female poets had to apply the same metaphors and similes that men used to describe their beloved to their male objects of love. Metaphors pertaining specifically to a male beloved became acceptable only from the nineteenth century onwards. Although women had to adhere to the codified regulations of classical poetry, by writing their *gazel*s (lyrical poems) they proved that they were as capable of attaining the same level of poetic accomplishments as men. In this way, they also tried to correct (albeit to a small degree) the previous imbalance created by a male-dominated poetic tradition. Women could usually rise to this immense challenge only if they belonged to an intellectual background with importance given to advanced female education on a par with that imparted to men.¹⁹³

Gibb however, provides us with some enlightening information on three Ottoman female poets between the late fifteenth and early eighteenth centuries. They were Zeyneb Hatun (1481 ca.), Mihri Hatun (1514 ca.) and Sidqi (1703 ca.). Suraiya Faroqhi also mentions Hubbi Hatun who wrote in the sixteenth century and Fitnet Hatun who made her mark in the latter years of the eighteenth century.¹⁹⁴

Born in 1460 or 1461 in Amasiya, Mihri probably belonged to a family of dervişes with a very respected poetic reputation. Her talents were recognized and encouraged by her father. Mihri's full name is documented by Evliya Çelebi as Mihr-u-Mah, which translates into 'Sun and Moon'. Her name is also

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, for an in-depth description of Ottoman poetic styles and forms see pp. xxiii – xxviii, xxxii. Also see Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 117 and Kemal Silay, ' "Singing His Words": Ottoman Women Poets and the Power of Patriarchy' in Madeline Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 204-5, 207, 212.

¹⁹⁴ Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 117.

given as Mihrünnisa or Fahrünnisa.¹⁹⁵ One of the famous poets and biographers of the time, Aşiq Paşa, was the grandson of Pir İlyas, from whom Mihri Hatun could also trace her descent. Her father, according to Latifi, another respected biographer, was a *kadi* in Amasiya.¹⁹⁶

Mihri was in literary contact with other poets of her time, namely Mu'eyyedzade, Guwahi and Necati, the last being the most renowned lyric poet of his time and also the most influential on Mihri's style of writing. Mihri is reported to have eagerly asked a friend of Necati as to her most admirable quality in the eyes of the poet, to which the answer was, her amphibology.¹⁹⁷ While she is said to have been in frequent literary contact with Guwahi, she and Mu'eyyedzade were believed to have been in love during their youth and she attended his poetic circle in Amasya. Her arrogance where her accomplishments as a poet was concerned led her to describe herself as a 'mine of fancy', an allusion to which has been made by an anonymous poet in the following verse:

Mihri, thyself is e'en the mine of fancy in the world;
And now the poets of the world are ever praising thee.¹⁹⁸

She was a part of the literary circle of Prince Ahmet (1465-1513), son of Sultan Bayezid II, at Amasiya and her name appears in a list of poets who had been honoured by Bayezid II.¹⁹⁹

Mihri's talent and works were recognised and appreciated in the literary circles of the time as noted above. This in itself was a major accomplishment in a male-dominated society. Mihri had been fortunate in that she was the daughter of an eminent figure in the literary field who honed his daughter's talents through a superior education. Although as noted earlier, the writing and patronage of poetry was primarily confined to the upper classes, Mihri as

¹⁹⁵ Nazan Bekiroğlu, 'Female Poets in Ottomans', in *Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, vol. 4, p. 251. Gibb, *Ottoman Poems*, (1882), pp. 31, 184 and E.J.W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry* (London, 1900-1909), pp. 123-28.

¹⁹⁶ Kemal Silay, '“Singing his Words”', in *Women in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 211. Gibb, *Ottoman Poems*, pp. 31, 184 and *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, pp. 123-125.

¹⁹⁷ Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, vol. 4, p. 126.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 125-128.

¹⁹⁹ Faroqi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 117.

a woman had to master the art of Ottoman poetry which strictly adhered to Persian rules and make her mark in a male-dominated sphere. This meant that she had also meticulously studied the works of the famous Persian luminaries. Conscious of the prevalent impression of women's deficient abilities, she composed the following lines in refutation:

Since they cry that woman lacketh wit alway,
Needs must they excuse whatever word she say.
Better far one female, if she worthy be,
Than a thousand males, if all unworthy they.²⁰⁰

Mihri lived in an age when most women in the Ottoman Empire could not avail themselves of even a fraction of the opportunities that she had received.²⁰¹ Like her nineteenth-century counterpart, Nigar Hanım, she organized literary meetings at home. Unlike most of her successors however, she displayed uniquely feminine emotions in her poetry rather than the more masculine mode of expression adopted by many female Ottoman poets.²⁰² She could also be seen as radical for her times since she did not marry, and marriage for an Ottoman woman was often perceived as the ultimate reason for her existence in the world as has been noted earlier in this study. Whether she had intended to prove a point by not marrying is a mystery, but she had proved to all that her talent could compare to most of her famed contemporaries and had also managed to live an exemplary, virtuous and successful life in her state of spinsterhood.

Although Gibb states that her style and expression were neither entirely novel nor intricate, he praises her for the fact that she produced a body of work equal to most of her male contemporaries at a time when women faced a clear disadvantage in the literary arena as the paucity of known female poets in the early modern period indicates. Aşiq Paşa records her most favourably in his annals – 'Although she was a woman, yet did she overthrow many a man in the lists'.²⁰³ Aşiq Paşa as well as Latifi comment on her poetic expression

²⁰⁰ Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, pp. 128-130.

²⁰¹ Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 122.

²⁰² Nazan Bekiroğlu, 'Female Poets in Ottomans', in *Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, vol. 4, p. 251.

²⁰³ Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, p. 124.

as being distinctively feminine, whereas the strength of her emotions expressed in her verses were masculine. For instance:

Yonder dearest one began to speak and question me of love;
Then I gave my heart for answer, and no more spoke he of love.
I said, "At the first sight I missed to see the face of thee."
He thereupon upraised his veil and answered, "Look and see!"
The eye it saw, the heart it knew, that I was slain of love
Yet for that sight and for that knowledge none did pity me.²⁰⁴

These lines, along with the fact that she openly expressed her passion for Iskender (the son of Sinan Paşa) by name in writing, was entirely unorthodox by late fifteenth and early sixteenth century standards.²⁰⁵ Although expression of this intensity and detail was considered normal in poetry written by men, coming from a woman it was viewed as unsuitable. Mihri has therefore to be given the full credit, not only for her superior talent, but also for the fact that she was recognised and admired despite a male-dominated poetic environment.

One of Mihri's contemporaries was a poetess named Zeyneb who died in 1563.²⁰⁶ According to Latifi she came from Qastamuni, the daughter of a well-educated man who recognised her talent at an early age and provided her with a versatile education, which held her in good stead as she began her literary career. However, Aşiq Paşa says that she was the daughter of a *qadi* in Amasiya and was a friend of Mihiri. Both women, according to Aşiq not only exchanged verses but also attended the literary circles of Prince Ahmet during his tenure as governor of Amasiya.²⁰⁷

In any case, what is certain is that Zeyneb too produced a considerable body of work which she dedicated to Sultan Mehmet II. Like Mihri, she earned a high degree of respect for her accomplishments. Latifi referred to her as:

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 131-2.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 132.

²⁰⁶ Nazan Bekiroğlu, 'Female Poets in Ottomans', in *Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, vol. 4, pp. 250-1. Zeynep Hatun's original name was Zeynünnisa.

²⁰⁷ Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, p. 135.

a lady of virtue, and chastity, a maiden, modest and pure; in the female sex, in the class of womankind, a wonder of the age, one renowned and covered with fame.²⁰⁸

In Qinali Zada's words:

the bride her learning and poetry, is not hidden and concealed by the curtain of secrecy and the veil of bashfulness; but the rosiness of her beauty and the down and mole of her comeliness are beheld and esteemed of the public and the object of the gaze of every man and woman.²⁰⁹

High praise indeed from her respected contemporaries.

Misfortune struck her literary endeavours after her marriage for her husband not only forbade her interaction with the members of her literary circle, most of whom were male, but also curbed her writing. If Mihri and Zeyneb had indeed been friends, then it could be likely that one of Mihri's reasons for not marrying was the example of her friend; she perhaps did not wish to risk her passion for verse by engaging into an unfortunate marital alliance. There is also evidence that Zeyneb was a skilled musician; however, the instrument she had mastery over is not mentioned.²¹⁰ In his "Meş'a 'irü's-şu'ara" Aşiq Paşa states that Zeyneb Hatun eventually gave up writing poetry and lived in submission to her husband which she deemed as the proper thing to do. As Kemal Silay states, Aşiq Çelebi certainly considered it inappropriate for women to enter the male-dominated sphere of poetry, and in this he probably echoed the sentiments of the other poets.²¹¹ It is sad that someone with a broad-minded father with foresight should get attached to an orthodox husband, who stifled her talent; a reality which must have produced a high degree of frustration in someone so accomplished.

There are unfortunately only two examples of Zeyneb's work; part of a *gazel*, cited by the poet Sehi, and another *gazel*, mentioned by Latifi, Aşiq Paşa and

²⁰⁸ Gibb, *Ottoman Poems*, p. 174.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 174.

²¹⁰ Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, p. 135.

²¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 135-6, and Kemal Silay, ' "Singing his Words"', in *Women in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 211.

Hasan, another biographer.²¹² Although her poetry is, like Mihri's, steeped in romantic metaphors and expressions, it does not give the impression of being as deeply personal as that of Mihri's, not least because she mentions no names.²¹³

Hubbi Hatun (whose real name was Ayşe) is the only known Ottoman female poet of the sixteenth century. Born in Amasiya, she acquired an advanced education and was also associated with the courts of Selim II and Murad III through her husband Şemsi Çelebi.²¹⁴ Although her poetic style is considered to be superior to that of her predecessors, her expressive style displayed a masculine flavour. She not only has *gazels* and *kasides* (a poem honouring great people) attributed to her, but also a *mesnevi* (a long poem) entitled *Hurşid and Cemşid* with over three thousand *beyits* (couplets).²¹⁵ Hubbi Hatun, continued living in the palace after her husband's death. She was also said to be privy to the Sultan's secrets, as well as the mistress of many of the courtiers. She died in 1590 during the reign of Murad III.²¹⁶

Apart from Hubbi Hatun, mentioned by Faroqhi, poetesses appear to have remained obscure throughout most of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²¹⁷ It is hard to imagine that the Ottoman Empire did not produce any female poets of equal calibre to men during that period; a more likely explanation is that few of their works have survived. For instance, Tuti Kadın, the wife of the poet Beki, is reported to have been a poet in the sixteenth century, but her work has not survived.²¹⁸

The next poetess we learn of was Sidqi (or Sitki).²¹⁹ She wrote at the end of the seventeenth century and the first years of the eighteenth century. Apparently many poets used the pseudonym of Sidqi, and she had boldly

²¹² Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, p. 136-7. Also Gibb, *Ottoman Poems*, p. 18.

²¹³ *Ibid*, p. 18.

²¹⁴ Nazan Bekiroğlu, 'Female Poets in Ottomans', in *Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, vol. 4, p. 251.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 251, 260.

²¹⁶ Mansel, *Constantinople*, p. 107.

²¹⁷ Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 118.

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 118.

²¹⁹ Gibb, *Ottoman Poems*, p. 212.

adopted a common male pseudonym. Whether this was in order to conceal her feminine identity is not clear.

Sidqi was the daughter of Qamer Muhammed, one of the *Ulema* during Sultan Mehmed IV's reign. An entire body of work or 'Diwan' is also attributed to her as well as *ilahis* and two devotional poems, *The Treasury of Lights* and *The Collection of Information*.²²⁰ According to Nazan Bekiroğlu, the Turkish titles of these unpublished poems are *Genc-I-Envar* and *Mecmuau'l Hayal*.²²¹ Apart from this, information about this poetess is scarce.²²²

Ani Hatun, who died in 1710, was another early eighteenth-century poet. Although her work remains undiscovered, she is believed to have composed a 'Diwan'. The daughter of a highly educated mother, she appears to have been better known for her calligraphy than for her poetry.²²³

Fitnet Hatun (real name, Zubeyde d. 1780) was another famed poet who lived in Istanbul. She was known for her wit and obtuseness; her work appears in a collection of anecdotes. In her anecdotes she and a male literary figure engage in a dialogue which includes erotic innuendo.²²⁴

All these female poets had some features in common. All belonged to the upper reaches of society and had been educated within the oriented educational curriculum because of their literary families. Some of them had benefited educationally from their husbands, while others like Zeynep's husband curtailed her writing. In the latter case, the cause and ironically enough, the release from her unhappy marriage was her poetry.²²⁵ It was however evident that in order to enter the male-dominated poetic circles, women not only had to be highly educated, but had to attain the specific and

²²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 212.

²²¹ Nazan Bekiroğlu, 'Female Poets in Ottomans', p. 251. An *ilahi* is a religious poem. Sidqi belonged to the Bayramiye sect. Her sister, Faize Hanım is also reputed to be a poet, but she did not receive the fame that her sister did.

²²² Gibb, *Ottoman Poems*, p. 111. For a detailed explanation of all the gazels quoted here, see pp. 234-5, 239, 246. Also see, Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, pp. 124-7, 130, 136-7.

²²³ Nazan Bekiroğlu, 'Female Poets in Ottomans', p. 252.

²²⁴ Faruqi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 118.

²²⁵ Nazan Bekiroğlu, 'Female Poets in Ottomans', p. 250

sophisticated training in the Persian poetic style in order to begin their own literary careers, and then too it was an area in which women's participation was not always accepted or perceived as appropriate.

3.d) Assessment:-

Having looked at the representations of women by both male and female authors, there is a similarity in certain aspects, for instance the strength of the female character which shines out on account of her suffering and silent forbearance in some works. However, the aim in portraying this picture differed. While some male authors largely wished to uphold patriarchy by conveying the point that women should learn to accept and live in submission to their significant male other, (even if they cause suffering and pain), in this 'valliant' manner, some women authors used this depiction of suffering to actively point out the evils of male authority and the ways in which the opposite sex exploited it at times to their own advantage, and even suggested methods of improvement.²²⁶ As the eighteenth century advanced however, women increasingly began to be portrayed as learned and knowledgeable in the plays enacted at the time. For example, female protagonists were increasingly being described as 'the philosophress', while in his play *The Female Virtuoso* (1693), Thomas Wright described the female protagonist in the words of her husband as 'my walking University, my puzzling library of flesh'. Moreover, Valeria, the female character in Mrs. Centlivre's play, *The Basset Table*, written in 1705, is referred to as 'a philosophical girl'.²²⁷ Even though, the motive of many such plays was to satirize the newly emerging phenomenon of the so-called 'learned lady', it was evidence enough that advancement had begun in full swing in the field of female education, readership and authorship.

The one striking feature which becomes almost immediately evident is that there appears to be a clear imbalance in the amount of literature written by

²²⁶ Mary Astell's proposal to the ladies was one such instance.

²²⁷ Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, p. 357. Mrs. Centlivre's full name was Susanna Centlivre (1669?-1723).

women in England and in the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman literature flourished not only under the considerable patronage of the Sultans, but also benefited from contributions from them. The subject and theme of most poems was steeped in romance, both personal and legendary, and therefore, women were generally represented in that context. However, women's writings are scarce. The possibilities are that either many works by women have not survived, or because of the repressive attitude of many Ottoman men towards their wives, it is possible that many talented women writers went unnoticed. What is clear nevertheless is that in the few instances where women made their mark on the literary scene, their considerable poetic skills shone out. The discussion of Ottoman poetesses reveals that not only was the male-dominated sphere of poetry seen as inappropriate for a woman to venture into, but this was a task made all the more challenging for women who needed to acquire a high degree of education so as to aspire towards being recognised in their own right by male contemporaries. Furthermore, the masculine language and metaphors of the genre was yet another hurdle for the female poet wishing to stand out in literary circles. While adhering to the accepted format of language and style in order to be accepted and recognised, she was simultaneously treading on delicate ground in the knowledge that the very language and male metaphors adopted by her in her poetry were considered as inappropriate when expressed by a woman. However, it is evident that women often had to rely on encouragement from their families in order to attain the sophisticated level of learning needed to display their literary creativity, which perhaps explains the rare examples of female authors. Since we know very little about the kind of education that women received, it is difficult to make any associations between the possible lack, or breadth of education that women received, and the scarcity of female literary activities, and hence it is also equally difficult to conclusively say whether or not it was the lack of education that might have limited the areas of female creativity.

As Gibb states, the belief in women's intellectual inferiority appeared to be a common feature in Ottoman and English society.²²⁸ Although this was accepted by many women in both realms, there were those who took offence at this portrayal and wrote vociferously in order to repudiate such claims. The seventeenth century was full of examples of such writing in England, but it is interesting to see how similar views had been expressed in verse by Mihri in the fifteenth century, in a society where women's voices were increasingly silenced in public.

While using romance as the theme for poetry or prose by women authors was disapproved of, we can find instances of such occurrences both, in England and the Ottoman Empire. In some ways it depicts a daring, defiant streak in the women of the age, who boldly followed in the romantic tradition, battling criticism head on.

The apparent lack of prescriptive literature, pamphlets and novels attributed to women in the Ottoman regime was indicative of the fact that unlike England, Ottoman women did not utilize the medium of the prescriptive literary technique to address their grievances and question male authority. A speculative explanation might revolve around the assumption that male authority was entirely accepted and internalised by women as having its basis in, what was perceived as religious principles itself. Alternatively, it could also be perceived as women generally enjoying a comfortable position of respect in society on account of the exercise of their prescribed social roles, as Deniz Kandiyoti has suggested, thereby resulting in the absence of the overpowering need to express their grievances and anger at personal injustice.²²⁹ Women were certainly comparatively educationally disadvantaged and were largely at men's mercy where the recognition of their intellectual talents was concerned. There is no evidence yet of Ottoman female authors calling for a woman-centred world as was seen in the works of Astell and Cavendish for instance. This suggests that male authority was not a focus of censure amongst Ottoman women leading once again to the assumption of

²²⁸ Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, p. 129.

²²⁹ See Introduction, pp. 14-5 for details.

male superiority being an internalised feature of the feminine psyche. These assumptions may well alter or be entirely refuted as further evidence of Ottoman female authors is unearthed.

Women in England and the Ottoman Empire appeared to have restricted their authorship to the writing of autobiographies, fiction and poetry as in both regions there is no evidence thus far of participation of women in the fields of science or written interpretations or commentaries on religious scriptures. In the case of Englishwomen, the cause was most likely the emphasis on the Christian notion of women's silence in church and their exclusion from the priesthood. Ottoman women too may have been excluded from written interpretations of the religious text on similar grounds since women could not be *imams*. Since information and translations of works in the other branches of Ottoman literature is scanty, forming logical and concrete comparisons with English literature would be daring and perhaps inaccurate. Nevertheless, the literary facts available to us provide some fascinating knowledge of women, their perceptions, their skills as authors and the manner in which they were viewed by their own people.

Conclusion:-

Keeping in mind the earlier discussion on the training and audience involved in the visual arts and literature, for women in both fields it was all the more a challenge to enter an arena which was male-dominated, particularly where painting or writing for a livelihood was concerned. This again posed a greater challenge for Ottoman female poets who had to be trained in not only the Persian tradition of poetry which involved acquiring a higher level of education but also in dealing with male-orientated metaphors and phraseology. If the tradition of training and apprenticeship in painting was indeed the norm in the Ottoman Empire, then this communal or public method of artistic education could indeed be the explanation for the apparent lack of female artists at least amongst the secluded and segregated upper class. As has been observed, some women did rise above the challenge and have left their mark on the artistic and literary canvas of the time.

Since women's participation in the artistic and literary spheres was perceived as an encroachment into the public arena, women's activities beyond the domestic sphere were censured and therefore women found ingenious ways of making inroads into this male-dominated arena while still remaining within the accepted boundaries. Whereas women in England managed in the visual arts and literature, to actively elicit public recognition, albeit in a limited manner and in comparatively few instances, the active creation of Ottoman women's public image was largely through architecture and its patronage and in rare instances through poetry. The fame and recognition of female poets in the Ottoman Empire, like English female painters, were dependent on the initial support and encouragement of their families, while the involvement of Ottoman women in the patronage of architecture was not only an activity commended by religion but also a significant strategy towards keeping the faltering public image of the Empire alive and well.

It is possible that the commissioning, production, publication and survival of women's artistic and literary contributions depended on their demand. Of all the categories of art and literature discussed here, it would appear that it was Englishwomen's literary works that had the greatest market in England, while in the Ottoman context it was women's architectural endeavours that were the call of the day. Embroidery by Ottoman women on the other hand appeared to be popular not only in Ottoman markets but also in European ones as the demand for Turkish designs has shown. The possible reason for the higher demand for female authorship in England than in the Ottoman Empire was because of their subject matter which often dealt directly with women's issues and a call for an improvement of their condition. In the Ottoman context however, the avenue of poetry which followed the strict Persian tradition left little scope for women to deviate from the accepted style and subject matter. It does appear that the poetic form tended to be the most patronised of the other forms of literature in the Empire particularly since many of the sultans were also poets and had their own poetic circles. This explanation may well be refuted in light of future research in the field of Ottoman literature.

A striking distinction between English and Ottoman women's mark on the artistic and literary canvas of the time lay in the motivating force behind such activities. While Englishwomen desired to create a significant and lasting impression in a male-dominated world (even at times wishing a world which was undoubtedly women-focused with men being relegated to the periphery), the representation of the public image of Ottoman women had more to do with their depiction in terms of class and consequent authority, rather than a need to modify an androcentric society. In this manner Ottoman women's participation in artistic and literary fields appears to have been personal or which adhered to poetic traditions, as opposed to embarking on such endeavours with an agenda of striving towards the betterment of women's lot, which comes through particularly sharply in Englishwomen's writings of the early modern period. In the field of architectural patronage however, Englishwomen became publicly visible largely through commissioning of personal or secular structures, whereas the motives of Ottoman women were entirely to create a public presence through mainly non-secular and public monuments, whose grandeur and location would make a clear statement about their importance and the power of the dynasty. Therefore, among the upper classes, while the symbolic representation of social status and authority of Englishwomen was primarily transferred on to public space through the patronage of personal portraits, paintings and architecture, in the Ottoman realm, women's public image and authority of the dynasty was reflected through the patronage of religious and public structures. Despite differing motives, Ottoman and English women did manage to make themselves publicly visible outside their domestic spheres; the former doing so across physical barriers of a segregated society, while the latter accomplishing this task by publicly asserting their individuality on canvas and paper. Creating a public image for themselves through their artistic, architectural and literary endeavours, was then perhaps the means by which women sought to counterbalance the negative associations and representations of them made by their male contemporaries as intellectually and creatively inferior beings.

CONCLUSION

‘...Christian Ladies liue with much more freedome
Than such as are borne here. Our iealous Turkes
Neuer permit their faire wiues to be seene
But at the publique Bannias, or the Mosques
And euen then vaylde and garded.’¹

This lament by the North African Muslim Queen Donusa to her English slave, Carazie, features in Massinger's *The Renegado*. This play, written in 1624, brings out the differences in women's social position in England and the Ottoman Empire. Carazie informs Donusa during the course of the play that Englishwomen, especially in the cities, had broken off their age-old chains of servitude and submission to male authority and had even taken on masculine roles in the household. He describes the average Englishwoman as wearing the 'breeches',² implying that the early modern period was witnessing a role reversal where authority within the family framework was concerned. In contrast, the submissiveness of Turkish women is depicted as the role model for all women.³

How far though, is this depiction representative of reality? To what extent was the normative position of women in the scriptures, law and society translated into practice in reality? What are the parallels and distinctions that emerge between the two cultures from the analysis of norm and practice? What was the status that women possessed in both regions in the context of the areas of their lives discussed in this study? And finally, in the interest of the discussion of public and private spaces, to what extent did these two spheres merge in the daily lives of women despite the normative dichotomy of assigned spaces to men and women? Undoubtedly, the imbalance in primary source material makes this task difficult, but a combined reading of the available Ottoman

¹ Philip Edwards and Colin Gibson (eds), *The Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger*, vol. II, p. 22.

² Nabil Matar, 'The Representation of Muslim Women in Renaissance England' in *The Muslim World*, vol. 86, no. 1 (1996), p. 52.

³ *Ibid*, pp. 51-2. Also see *The Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger*, p. 23.

primary sources in English as well as secondary sources have been used to attempt a fairer comparison.

While both the Bible and the Qur'an are clear about the spiritual equality of the sexes, their equality in the earthly world is unquestioned. Christianity and Islam are essentially patriarchal religions where men have the edge over women. Women's physical and at times, moral weakness was used as an excuse for the need for stronger male authority and protection. Although both religious texts are seen as timeless teachings applicable to all peoples and cultures, societies which are in a constant state of flux would naturally adopt and adapt its doctrines to suit individual environments. While the practise of Christianity underwent momentous changes in England with the Reformation in the sixteenth century, the Ottomans adapted the practise of Islam and Islamic law so that it was not only in tune with Turkish customs and traditions but also with the varying traditions of the utterly different cultures the Empire engulfed. The practise of the gendered roles prescribed by both religions differed not only over class boundaries and over time, but also in keeping with individual situations and circumstances. At the end of the day religious doctrines had to be flexible enough to incorporate social and cultural differences and changes over time.

Although in the English context women's diaries and autobiographies reveal an intimate picture of women's lives, their content and flavour varied in keeping with external events and developments such as Puritan Protestantism or the Civil War for instance. The social roles that women played therefore also varied according to such developments. While a wife of a Puritan may have been docile and submissive, the wife of a parliamentarian or royalist during the Civil War may have had to take over the responsibilities of her husband as head of the family in his absence at war. Unfortunately, it is difficult to draw similar parallels in the Ottoman context due to the lack of first-hand evidence left by women. Therefore, as Margaret Meriwether has rightly

pointed out, while researching women in the Ottoman Empire, the historian often slips into a discussion which adopts the attribute of changelessness.⁴

Even though England was not a segregated society, it was the women from the lower class and poor women in both cultures who were more visible in public and participated in the daily life of the community. In the Ottoman Empire, veiling which was common among upper class women was often not a practical option for women who needed to go out in public and earn a livelihood to support their families. This is not to say that women from the upper and middle classes in both regions did not play a part in community life. While lower class women were often producers or those who provided a service, upper and middle class women were often the consumers or those who availed of the service provided. This section of society was therefore comparatively the more covert, less physically visible participant in daily life.

Marriage and divorce laws varied greatly in both cultures as has been observed. However, while the prescribed Islamic laws on marriage and divorce empowered women with the theoretical right of redressing any grievances in this regard in court, the outdated and ambiguous marriage law in England permitted women to seek justice in the ecclesiastical courts. Since boundaries between what was considered legal and illegal were often blurred, men and women could look to the church courts to resolve marital disputes. Although divorce was not an option in England until 1857, as church court records reveal, women often took matters into their own hands to affect a separation in the event of an intolerable marriage, adultery or cruelty on the part of their husbands. Islam gave women the right to initiate a divorce, although this was not only often practically difficult for women to undertake but would leave them at a financial disadvantage. As studies of the *kadi's* registers have shown however, there is evidence of women not only initiating a divorce but also suing their husbands in the case of the deprivation of their property rights or *Mahr*. It has been observed that the law and courts in both regions responded with sensitivity and flexibility as individual circumstances

⁴ Margaret Meriwether, *The Kin Who Count: Family and Society in Ottoman Aleppo, 1770-1840*, (Texas 1999), 210-12.

demanding and therefore although women were normatively at a legal disadvantage, church courts and the *kadi's* courts often attempted a sensitive implementation of normative law.

In theory, politically too, women in England and the Ottoman Empire were at a disadvantage. It appears that this disadvantage was even more pronounced in the Ottoman Empire since unlike in England, women were not permitted to accede to the throne in their own right. Despite the limitations, not only did England witness the successful reign of four queens between 1553 and 1714, but the Ottoman Empire saw the monumental rise in power of the Imperial Harem from Süleyman I's reign until the death of the last prominent *valide sultan* Turhan in 1683. In fact the power of harem women lasted uninterrupted for almost a century and a half. It is true that their power was entirely dependent on their sons. What was commendable though was not only the fact that enslaved Christian women managed to rise to the heights of power against all odds, but the manner in which these women ensured the continuance of their power as mothers of the reigning sultan through faction and intrigue. English queens on the other hand had to project themselves as successful monarchs without their sex being a hindrance to their popularity. The women of the Imperial Harem were not physically visible in the public eye, while English queens had to ensure that they physically projected a strong, confident and successful public image. The powers Ottoman *valide sultans* and English queens wielded therefore also differed in that the former's authority was indirect, through the channel (nominal or otherwise) of the sultan, while the latter exercised their powers directly in their own right. As was the case in most courtly circles, the indirect influences in varying degrees of other courtly ladies and harem women in government was a common feature in both regions.

It is in the fields of art and literature where distinctions in women's involvement once again come to the fore. As has been noted, while Englishwomen were visible in the creativity and patronage of art, architecture and literature, the achievements of Ottoman women in the field of painting are altogether lacking. Englishwomen's contributions to the literary field were

ever-increasing particularly throughout the seventeenth century, whereas in comparison only a handful of women are known to have been involved in literary activities in the Ottoman Empire, and then, too, restricted only to the field of poetry. Whether or not this comparative silence of Ottoman women in the literary sphere can be attributed to an education which was not conducive to literary activities or whether women were simply not as proactive in attempting the betterment of their lot, will remain speculations until new evidence is unearthed. Embroidery and architecture however were fields in which they were passionate contributors.

This brings us to our discussion of the gendered segregation of public and private spheres. In theory it was understood that women in England and the Ottoman Empire would be restricted within their private or domestic sphere while men would have monopoly over activities in the public sphere like politics for instance. This gendered dichotomy was however far from practised in reality as evidence of women's presence in the courts as plaintiffs, their active involvement in the daily life of the community as producers or service-providers, their direct and indirect involvement in the functioning of government and administration and their active participation in the fields of art, architecture and literature have revealed. Apart from the introduction of actresses on the Restoration stage, it was in the fields of the arts and literature that women were in the public eye without being physically visible. In fact, the involvement of royal harem women in the construction of public religious structures was a conscious effort to project a public image. Similarly, while being physically invisible, *hasekis* and *valide sultans* made a lasting impression in the public sphere. Thus all these women (English and Ottoman), while remaining within the accepted boundaries of their private realms had successfully managed to not only project their public image at the time, but also left lasting physical and historical evidence of their achievements and contributions.

The veiling and segregation of women in the Ottoman Empire present additional dimensions to the discussion of public and private. Among the sections of society where veiling was practised, women seldom ventured out

of their homes and when they did, they were covered in layers of clothing from head to toe. In this context, Lady Wortley Montagu's comment on these heavily-veiled Turkish women being the freest of all women becomes all the more poignant.⁵ While for the spectator these women were unidentifiable and anonymous, the converse was not true for them. We could then extend the concept of private sphere to their person and argue that these women became a part of the public space that was prohibited for them while remaining within the limits of their concealed personal sphere.

The segregation and seclusion of the sexes particularly in the Imperial Harem, as alluded to in this study, only served to enhance the fascination and mystery of harem women and life in the western imagination. The portrayal of Turkish women in European narratives as either being soulless or possessing inferior souls led to ideas of them either being denied Paradise or being relegated to a place inferior to and separate from the Heaven promised to righteous men. Therefore, it can be argued that the idea of women's seclusion in a separate segregated private sphere in the earthly world was even transferred to the afterlife in the imagination of these foreign observers. Therefore, the mystery of a secluded harem which was out of bounds for almost all men was extended to the afterlife.

In light of this analysis the status of English and Ottoman women can be reviewed. While the scriptures conferred upon women a particular position, the practice of religious principles created specific roles for both sexes. In both cultures under study these roles were gendered. Although at first glance the roles assigned to women appeared restrictive, it was the manner in which these roles were practised that affected women's status. Both Protestantism and Islam conferred a status of respect on a married woman. However, even within the category of married women, it was married women from the royalty and upper class who enjoyed the highest status. Status therefore appears to be linked first to class and then to gender for even royal women were theoretically subject to the authority of their husbands and fathers. In addition,

⁵ Malcolm Jack (ed.), *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Turkish Embassy Letters*, p. 71.

not only did the status of women differ from one class to another, but also within classes and was dependent largely on individual circumstances and the manner and degree to which male authority within families was exercised. Furthermore, each culture had its own concept of what it considered as a high status. For instance, while the seclusion of Ottoman women may have been perceived through English eyes, as women possessing a low social status, it is possible that it was indeed the social roles that women played within their personal lives rather than their seclusion which determined status in Ottoman eyes. Status, as a result, is a dynamic concept and it is difficult to make generalised statements about the status of women in England and the Ottoman Empire using a common standard. Consequently, it would perhaps be unfair to gauge whether women in one culture possessed a higher status than women in the other culture.

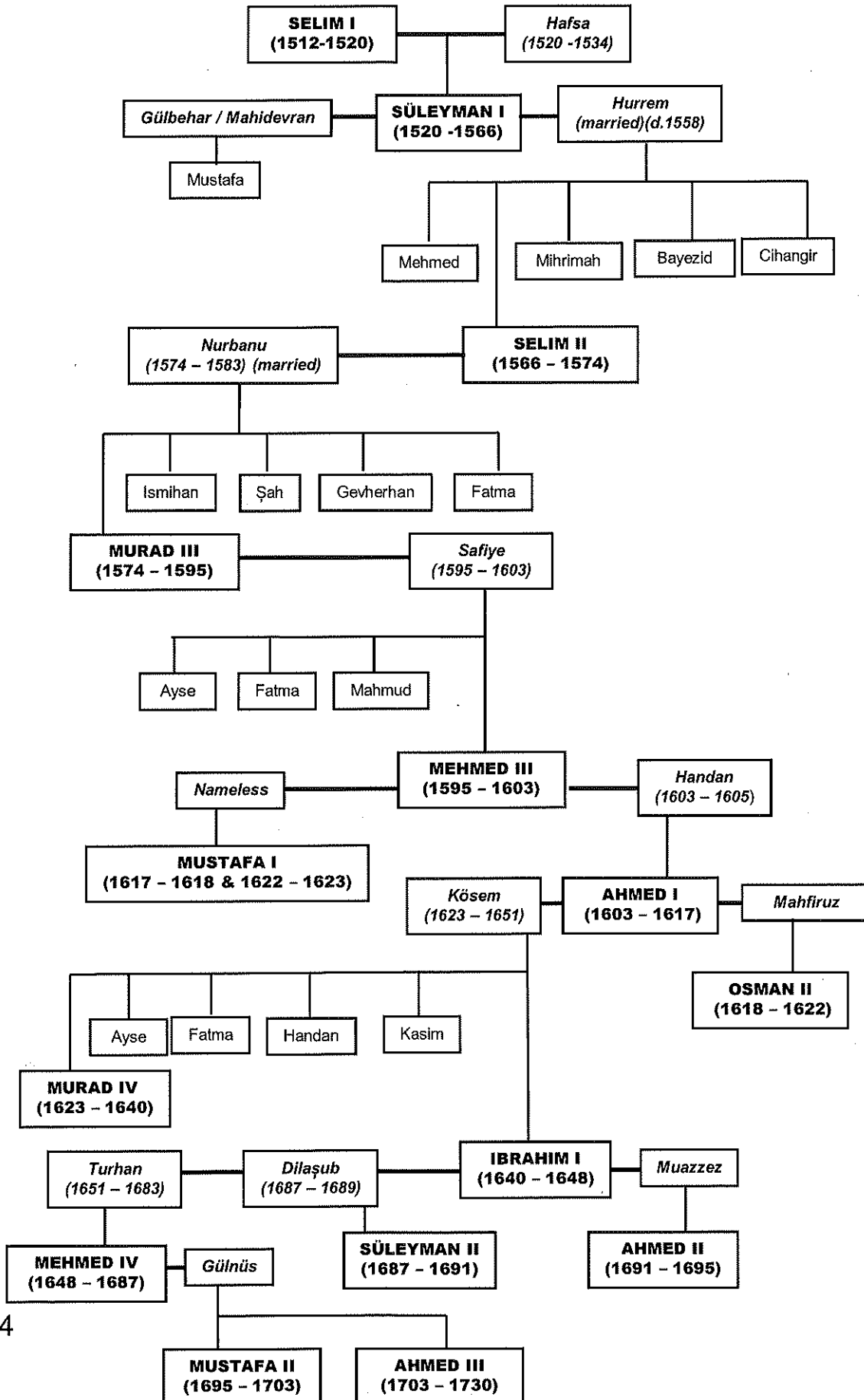
In brief then, in both regions it was the patriarchal nature of Christianity and Islam which prescribed the roles of women. These roles often limited women to the domestic realm, while making the public sphere the domain of men. However, it was the implementation of their roles in conjunction with the demands of their day-to-day existence, the social milieu within which they exercised their roles and the political circumstances of the time that determined the fluidity of the theoretical dichotomy of public and private. When opportunities arose for women to make a direct public impact, it appears that in both regions they did not let themselves be constrained by male opinion or interpretations of religious doctrine which advocated their restriction to domestic duties. This was particularly evident in not only women's active presence in government and rule but also in the subtler and more creative avenues of art, architecture and literature, which often permitted them a public voice or image and opportunity to display their talents while often adhering to the accepted decorum of the private sphere. The commonality of the permeability of the boundaries between the public and private in both cultures becomes more significant when we consider the physical restrictions on movement and the segregation of the sexes in the Ottoman context, and this then enables us to obtain a better understanding of women's experiences across cultures, religions and boundaries. For instance,

since the segregation of the sexes was not conducive to Ottoman women's status and authority being symbolically represented through the medium of portraits or paintings in the same way as in England, they found the more acceptable avenue of architectural patronage of religious structures to achieve this aim. Although the physical appearance, dress, religion, manners, customs traditions and history of the regions under study may have differed markedly, the parallels that can be drawn when assessing women's experiences on a more holistic basis, sheds light on the core of women's experiences and the similar ways in which they responded to male authority and worked around the gender dichotomy to gain a public voice.

This study has attempted to comparatively address a number of issues that concerned women in the early modern period. Provided the relevant information becomes available, a natural follow-up to this study would be an investigation of Ottoman male and female perceptions of English women, particularly of those women who accompanied their husbands to Ottoman lands as wives of ambassadors and therefore who moved in the privileged circles of Ottoman society. It would then be interesting to observe whether Ottoman perceptions of English women were positive or whether these too were biased accounts written with the intention of presenting Islam and Muslims as superior to Christians and the English. I therefore conclude this study in the hope that it can be followed on in greater depth once further evidence is unearthed.

APPENDIX

Sultans & Valide Sultans of the Early Modern Period



APPENDIX

<u>Key</u>	
SELIM I (1512-1520)	Sultan with dates of reign
<i>Hafsa</i> <i>(1520 -1534)</i>	<i>Valide Sultan</i> with dates of office
<hr/>	Tie of concubinage

GLOSSARY OF TURKISH AND ISLAMIC TERMS

adet – established customs

baş haseki – head concubine or mother of the oldest son of the reigning
sultan

baş kadın – first or head concubine

beyit – couplet

büyük valide – grandmother

gazel – lyrical poem

gelin – apprentice

hammam – public bath

hanafi – one of the four schools of Islamic law generally followed by the Sunni
sect of Islam

haseki – the favourite concubine of the reigning sultan

hul or *khul* – divorce initiated by the wife in Islam

idda – the 40-day period immediately following a divorce or death of a
husband observed by his wife in order to ensure that she is not
pregnant before she is allowed to remarry

ikinci kadın – second favourite concubine

imam – priest

kadi – judge learned in Islamic law

kanun – written decrees of the sultans

kaside – poem honouring great people

kira – Jewish agent or secretary of the favourite concubine or mother of the
reigning sultan

mahr – nuptial gift given by a husband to his wife at the time of marriage

medresse – Islamic school usually attached to a mosque

mesnevi – long poem

nafaqa – a payment made in lieu of the acquisition by the husband of the right
to his wife's confinement

nikaah – Marriage contract as per Islamic law

paşa – high-ranking official in the government of the sultan

qibla – The location of the Kaaba in Mecca towards which Muslims turn while
praying

saray – palace

sharia – Islamic law derived from the Qur'an

ulema – body of Mullahs or religious scholars usually holding an official post

urf – will of the reigning sultan

valide sultan – the mother of the reigning sultan

wakf – trust, the finances from which were often used to fund philanthropy

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRINTED PRIMARY SOURCES -

Al-Bukhari, *Al-Sahih* (Collection of Authentic Hadiths)

Anger, Jane A *Protection of Women, 1589* in Betty Travitsky and Patrick Cullen (eds) *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works, Part 1: Printed Writings, 1500-1640, volume 4, Defences of Women: Jane Anger, Rachel Speght, Ester Sowernam and Constantia Munda* (Scolar, 1996)

Astell, Mary A *Serious Proposal to the Ladies, Parts I and II*: Edited with Introduction and Notes by Patricia Springburg (London, 1997)
- *Some Reflections Upon Marriage: Occasioned by the Duke and Dutchess of Mazarine's Case; Which is Also Considered* (London, 1700)

Aquinas, Thomas *Summa Theologiae*, Vol. 13, 1a.90-102, Introduction, notes and appendices by Edmund Hill (London, 1964)

Behn, Aphra "To the unknown Daphnis on his Excellent Translation of Lucretius!" in Thomas Creech, *Titus Lucretius Carus, the Epicurean philosopher, his six books De natura rerum done into English verse, with notes* (Oxford, 1683)

Bent, Theodore J. (ed.), *Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant*1: *The diary of Master Thomas Dallam, 1599-1600*; II: *Extracts from the diaries of Dr. John Covel, 1670-1679; with some account of the Levant Company of Turkey Merchants* (London, Hakluyt Society, 1893)

Biddulph, William *Travels into Africa, Asia and to the Blacke Sea, London 1609*, in *The English Experience, its record in early printed books published in facsimile*, no. 22 (New York, 1968)

Blount, Henry A *voyage into the Levant. A breife relation of a journey, lately performed by Master H. B. Gentleman, from England by the way of Venice, into Dal[matia,] Sclavonia, Bosnah, Hungary, Macedonia, Thessaly, Thrace, Rhodes and Egypt, unto Gran Cairo: / [W]ith particular observations concerning the moderne condition of the Turkes, and other people under that empire* (London, 1636)

- Bon, Ottaviano *A description of the Grand Signor's seraglio, or Turkish emperours court* (London, 1650)
- Godfrey Goodwin (ed.), *The Sultan's Seraglio: an intimate portrait of life at the Ottoman court (from the seventeenth-century edition of John Withers)* (London, 1996)
- Boyle, Roger Earl of Orrery, *The Tragedy of Mustapha, the Son of Solyman the Magnificent* (London, 1668)
- Brown, Beatrice Curtis (ed.), *The letters and diplomatic instructions of Queen Anne* (London, 1935)
- Burnet, Gilbert *A sermon preached at the funeral of the Honourable Robert Boyle: at St. Martins in the Fields, January 7. 1691/2* (London, 1692)
- Castiglione, Baldassarre *The courtier of Count Baldessar Castilio diuided into foure bookes. Very necessary and profitable for yonge gentlemen and gentilwomen abiding in court, palaice or place, done into English by Thomas Hoby* (London, 1561)
- Cavendish, Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle *The life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle : to which is added the true relation of my birth, breeding, and life / by Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle*, C.H. Firth (ed.), (London, 1906)
- *Natures Pictures drawn by Fancies Pencil* (London, 1656)
 - *Playes written by the thrice noble, illustrious and excellent princess, the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle* (London, 1662)
 - *Poems and Fancies, The Epistle Dedicatory* (London, 1653)
 - *The description of a new world, called the blazing-world* (London, 1668)
 - *The philosphical and physical opinions written by Her Excellency the Lady Marchionesse of Newcastle, To the Two Universities* (London, 1655)
 - *The worlds olio written by the Right Honorable, the Lady Margaret Newcastle* (London, 1655)
- Channel, Elinor *A message from God, by a dumb woman to his Highness the Lord Protector. together with a word of advice to the Commons of England and Wales, for the electing of a Parliament* (London, 1654)
- Chudleigh, Mary *The Ladies Defence* (London, 1701)

- prebendarie of Sarum, late of Sidney Colledge in Cambridge*
(Cambridge, 1639)
- Gouge, William *Of Domesticall Duties eight treatises. I. An exposition of that part of Scripture out of which domesticall duties are raised. ... VIII. Duties of masters* (London, 1622)
- Green, Mary Anne Everett (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the reign of Elizabeth, preserved in the State Paper Department of Her Majesty's Public Record Office, 1580-1603* (London, 1863-1950)
- *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the reign of Elizabeth, 1601-1603* (London, 1870)
 - *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Charles II, 1661-1662* (London, 1861)
- Grymston, Elizabeth *Miscelanea, Meditations, Memoratives* (London, 1604)
- Halsband, Robert (ed) *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*
(Oxford, 1965- 67) 3 Vols
- Hazlitt, William (ed. and tr.), *The Table talk of Martin Luther* (Christian Focus Publications, 2003)
- Herbert, Anne (Clifford), Countess of Pembroke *The diary of the Lady Anne Clifford: with an introductory note by Victoria Mary Sackville-West*
(London, 1923)
- Hill, Aaron *A full and just account of the present of the Ottoman empire in all its branches: faithfully related from a serious observation taken in many years travels thro' those countries* (London, 1709)
- Jack, Malcolm (ed.), *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: The Turkish Embassy Letters* (London, 1994)
- Jackson, Charles *The autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton of East Newton, Co. York* (Durham, 1875)
- Jocelin, Elizabeth *The Mother's Legacie to her Unborne Childe* (London, 1624)
- Keeler, Mary (ed.), *Bibliography of British History, Stuart period, 1603-1714*
(Oxford, 1970)
- King James Version Popular Bible* (London, 2001)
- Knolles, Richard *The generall historie of the Turkes, from the beginning of*

that nation to the rising of the Ottoman Familie: with all the notable expeditions of the Christian princes against them. Together with The lives and Conquests of the Ottoman kings and emperours... With a new continuation, from ye yeare of our Lord 1629 unto the yeare 1638 faithfully collected (London, 1638)

- Lanyer, Aemilia *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* in *The early modern Englishwoman: a facsimile library of essential works. Printed writings 1500-1640. Part 2, v.10., The poets I: Isabella Whitney, Anne Dowriche, Elizabeth Melville (Colville), Aemilia Lanyer, Rachel Speght, Diana Primrose, Anne, Mary and Penelope Grey*, introduced by Susanne Woods, Betty S. Travitsky, and Patrick Cullen (Aldershot, 2001)
- Lavender, Theophilus (ed.), *The Travels of Certain Englishmen into Africa, Troy, Bithynia, Thracia, and to the Black Sea* (London, 1609)
- Leigh, Dorothy *The mother[s] blessing: or, The godly counsaile of a gentlewoman, not long since deceased, left behind for her children contayning many good exhortations, and godly admonitions profitable for all parents, to leaue as [l]egacy to their children* (London, 1621)
- Makin, Bathsua *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, 1673* (The Augustan Reprint Society Publication, Number 202, 1980)
- Manley, Delarivier *Almyna or the Arabian Vow* (London, 1707)
- Markham, Gervase *The English house-wife Containing the inward and outward vertues which ought to be in a compleate woman* (London, 1631)
- Milton, John *Paradise Lost* (London 1667)
- Moody, Joanna (ed.), *The private life of an Elizabethan lady: the diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599-1605* (Stroud, 2001)
- Pardoe, Julia *The City of the Sultan V2: And Domestic Manners of the Turks in 1836* (2007)
- Pix, Mary *Ibrahim the Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks* (London, 1696)
- Powell, Thomas *Tom of All Trades. Or the Plaine Path-way to Preferment. Being a discovery of a passage to promotion in all professions, trades, arts, and mysteries* (London, 1631)
- Racine, Jean *Bajazet*, edited with an introduction and analysis by Margaret M.

- McGowan (London, 1968)
- Ross, Alexander *The Alcoran of Mahomet* (London, 1649)
- Rycaut, Sir Paul *The present state of the Ottoman Empire: Containing the maxims of the Turkish politie, the most material points of the Mahometan religion, their sects and heresies, their convents and religious votaries. Their military discipline, with an exact computation of their forces both by land and sea* (London, 1668)
- Sale, George *Koran, commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammed, tr. into English immediately from the original Arabic;: with explanatory notes, Taken from the most approved commentators* (London, 1734)
- Sandys, George *A relation of a journey begun An. Dom. 1610.: Fovre bookes: Containing a description of the Turkish Empire, of Ægypt, of the Holy Land, of the remote parts of Italy, and ilands adioyning* (London, 1637)
- Shakespeare, William *As You Like It*, in Agnes Latham (ed.), *The Arden Shakespeare Series* (London, 1975)
- *Much Ado about Nothing*, F.H. Mares (ed.) (Cambridge, 2003)
 - *The Merchant of Venice*, William Baker and Brian Vickers (ed.) (New York, 2005)
 - *The Taming of the Shrew*, in Brian Morris (ed.), *The Arden Shakespeare Series* (London, 1981)
- Skilliter, Susan A. 'Three Letters from the Ottoman Sultana "Safiye" to Queen Elizabeth I', in S. M. Stern (ed.), *Documents from Islamic Chanceries, First series* (Oxford, 1965)
- *William Harborne and the Trade with Turkey, 1578-1582: A Democracy Study of the First Anglo-Ottoman Relations* (London, 1977)
- Slatta, Richard 'The Whys and Wherefores of Comparative Frontier History' in *Journal of the West*, 42, 1 (Winter, 2003)
- 'Comparative Frontier Mythology,' in *The Mythical West: An Encyclopedia of Legend, Lore and Popular Culture* (Santa Barbara, ABC-CLIO, 2001)
- Smith, Thomas *De Republica Anglorum, The Maner of the Governement or Policie of the Realme of England* (London, 1583)
- Smith, Thomas *Remarks upon the manners, religion, and government of the*

Turks. Together with a survey of the seven churches of Asia (London, 1678)

Sowernam, Ester *Ester Hath Hang;d Haman or An Answere to a Lewd Pamphlet, entitled, The Arraignment of Women*, in Betty Travitsky and Patrick Cullen (eds), *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works* (Scholar, 1996)

Speght, Rachel *A Mouzell for Melastomus*, in Betty Travitsky and Patrick Cullen (eds), *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works* (Scholar, 1996)

Stubbe, Henry *An Account of the Rise and Progress of Mahometanism, with the life of Mahomet and a vindication of him and his religion from the calumnies of the Christians ... From a manuscript copied by Charles Hornby of Pipe Office, in 1705 "with some variations and additions."* Edited, with an introduction and appendix, by Hafiz Mahmud Khan Shairani (London, 1911)

Swetnam, Joseph *The araignment of leuud, idle, froward, and vnconstant women or the vanitie of them, choose you whether: with a commendation of wise, vertuous and honest women: pleasant for married men, profitable for young men, and hurtfull to none*, (London, 1615)

The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights (Amsterdam, 1979)

The Qur'an

The Woman's Sharpe Revenge: or an answer to Sir Seldome Sober that writ those railing pamphlets called the Iuniper and Crabtree lectures, &c. Being a sound reply and a full confutation of those bookes: with an apology in this case for the defence of us women. Performed by Mary Tattle-well, and Ioane Hit-him-home, spinsters (London, 1640)

To the Supreme Authority (5 May, 1649)

Trapnell, Anna *Anna Trapnell's Report and Plea* (London, 1654)

Travitsky, Betty (ed.), *Subordination and authorship in early modern England: the case of Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton and her "loose papers"* (Arizona, 1999)

Wentworth, Anne *A vindication of Anne Wentworth tending to the better preparing of all people for her larger testimony, which is making ready*

for publick view. Published according to the will of God, and direction of charity. By Anne Wentworth. To which is annexed a letter written by an eminent Christian, concerning the said Anne Wentworth, and directed to the several congregations of the Anabaptists, and their respective pastors. As also a song of tryumph by the said Anne Wentworth, a daughter of Sion, newly delivered from the captivity of Babylon, &c.
(London, 1677)

Wernham, Richard Bruce (ed.), *List and Analysis of State Papers: Foreign Series, Elizabeth I, Preserved in the Public Record Office, vol. II, July 1590-May 1591* (London, 1969)

Whately, William *A bride-bush. Or, A direction for married persons Plainely describing the duties common to both, and peculiar to each of them. By performing of which, marriage shall prooue a great helpe to such, as now for want of performing them, doe finde it a little hell* (London, 1617)

Whitney, Isabella 'To Her Sister Misteris A.B.,' in *A Sweet Nosegay, Or pleasant Posye: contayning a hundred and ten Phylosophicall Flowers*, Richard J. Panofsky (ed.) (1573; reprint, New York, 1982)

Wroth, Lady Mary *The Countesse of Mountgomeries Urania* (London, 1621)

SECONDARY SOURCES -

Abdal-Rehim, Abdal-Rahman Abdal-Rehim 'The Family and Gender Laws in Egypt during the Ottoman Period', in Amira El Azhary Sombol (ed.), *Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws in Islamic History* (Syracuse, 1996)

Adair, John *By the Sword Divided: Eyewitness Accounts of the English Civil War* (London, 1983)

Airs, Malcolm *The Making of the English Country House 1500-1640*
(London, 1975)

Allen, Terry 'Aniconism and Figural Representation in Islamic Art' in *Five Essays on Islamic Art* (California, 1988)

Aslanapa, Oktay 'The Ottoman Miniature Painting', in Kemal Çiçek, Erjüment Kuran, Nejat Göyüng, ilber Ortaylı (eds), *The Great Ottoman Turkish Civilization*, vol. 4, *Culture and Arts* (Yeni Türkiye, 2000)

- Barber, Tabitha *Mary Beale (1632/3-1699)* (London, 1999)
- Bates, Ulku 'Women as Patrons of Architecture in Turkey', in Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (eds), *Women in the Muslim World* (Cambridge, 1978)
- Beilin, Elaine V. *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton, 1987)
- Bekiroğlu, Nazan 'Female Poets in Ottomans', in Kemal Çiçek, Erjüment Kuran, Nejat Göyüng, İlber Ortaylı (eds), *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, vol. 4, *Culture and Arts* (Yeni Türkiye, 2000)
- Bennett, Martyn *The Civil Wars Experienced: Britain and Ireland, 1638-1661* (London, 2000)
- Bevis, Richard *English Drama: Restoration and Eighteenth Century, 1660-1789* (London, 1988)
- Bloch, Marc 'Toward a Comparative History of European Societies' in Frederic C. Lane & Jelle C. Riemersma (eds.), *Enterprise and Secular Change: Readings in Economic History* (London 1953)
- Blodgett, Harriet *Centuries of Female Days, Englishwomen's Private Diaries* (New Brunswick, 1988)
- Borzello, Frances *Seeing Ourselves: Women's Self-Portraits* (London, 1998)
- Bowen, Marjorie (pseud.), *The Third Mary Stuart, Mary of York, Orange & England: Being a Character Study with Memoirs and Letters of Queen Mary II of England, 1662-1694* (London, 1929)
- Brant, Clare and Diane Purkiss *Women, Texts and Histories, 1575-1760* (London, 1992)
- Brotton, Jerry *The Renaissance Bazaar: From the Silk Road to Michelangelo* (Oxford, 2004)
- Brown, Elizabeth A. ' "Companion Me with My Mistress": Cleopatra, Elizabeth I and their Waiting Women' in Susan Frye and Karen Robertson (eds), *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999)
- Camden, William *The History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth Late Queen of England*, edited and with an introduction by Wallace T. MacCaffrey (Chicago, 1970)
- Cardini, Franco *Europe and Islam*, translated by Caroline Beamish (Oxford, 2001)

- Carlton, Charles *Going to the Wars: the Experience of the British Civil Wars 1638-1651* (London, 1992)
- Chadwick, Whitney *Women, Art and Society* (London, 2007)
- Chalmers, Hero "'The Person I am or What They Made Me To Be": The Construction of the Female Subject in the Autobiographies of Mary Carleton', in Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (eds), *Women, Texts and Histories, 1575-1760* (London, 1992)
- Chamberlin, Frederick, *The Sayings of Queen Elizabeth I* (London, 1923)
- Colley, Linda *Captives: Britain, Empire and the world, 1600-1850* (London, 2002)
- Collinson, Patrick *The Reformation* (London, 2005)
- Cook, Judith, *Women in Shakespeare* (London, 1980)
- Crawford, Patricia - 'From the Woman's View: Pre-Industrial England, 1500-1750' in Patricia Crawford, Margaret Anderson, Raelene Davidson, Patricia Jalland and Margaret Ker (eds), *Exploring Women's Past: Essays in Social History* (London, 1984)
- *Women and Religion in England, 1500-1720* (London, 1993)
- 'Women's Published Writings, 1600-1700', in Mary Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society* (London, 1991)
- Daniel, N. *Islam Europe and Empire* (Edinburgh, 1966)
- Dankoff, Robert *An Ottoman Mentality: the World of Evliya Çelebi* (Boston, 2004)
- *The Intimate Life of an Ottoman Statesman: Melek Ahmed Pasha (1588-1662), as Portrayed in Evliya Çelebi's Book of Travels (Seyahat-name)* (New York, 1991)
- Davidoff, Leonore 'Beyond the Public/Private: Thoughts on Feminist History in the 1990's', Paper delivered at Harvard University, Centre for European Studies, Nov. 27 (1990)
- Davis, Fanny *The Ottoman Lady: a Social History from 1718-1918* (Connecticut, 1986)
- Dengler, Ian C., 'Turkish Women in the Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age', in Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (eds), *Women in the Muslim World* (Cambridge, 1978)

- Doi, I. Abdul Rahman *Women in the Quran and the Sunnah* (London, 1988)
- Doran, Susan *Monarchy and Matrimony: the Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London, 1996)
- Dray, Stephen *Matthew's Gospel* (Leicester, 1998)
- Eldem, Edhem, Daniel Goffman and Bruce Masters *The Ottoman City Between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir and Istanbul* (Cambridge, 1999)
- Emmison, F.G. *Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts* (Chelmsford, Essex County Council, 1973)
- Engels, Friedrich *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (New York, 1979)
- Erickson, Amy Louise *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London, 1993)
- Faroghi, Suraiya *Approaching Ottoman History: an introduction to the Sources* (Cambridge, 1999)
- *Stories of Ottoman Men and Women: Establishing Status, Establishing Control* (Istanbul, 2002)
 - *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire* (London, 2000)
- Ferguson, Kathy E. *The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory* (Berkeley, 1993)
- Fisher, C.G. and A. Fisher 'Topkapi Sarayi in the mid-Seventeenth Century: Bobovi's Description', in *Archivum Ottomanicum* II (1985)
- Fleischer, Cornell *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600)* (New Jersey, 1986)
- Fraser, Antonia *The Weaker Vessel: Woman's Lot in Seventeenth-century England* (London, 1984)
- Freely, John *Inside the Seraglio: Private Lives of the Sultans in Istanbul* (London, 2000)
- Friedman, Alice 'Constructing and Identity in Prose, Plaster and Paint: Lady Anne Clifford as Writer and Patron of the Arts' in Lucy Gent (ed.), *Albion's Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550-1660* (London, 1995)
- Garlick, Kenneth 'Thoughts on Changing Attitudes to British Portraiture' in *The British Face: a View of Portraiture 1625-1850*, 19th February to 29th

- March 1986, catalogue edited and coordinated by Donald Garstang
(London, 1986)
- Gerber, Haim 'Social and Economic Position of Women in an Ottoman City,
Bursa', in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 12 (1980)
- Garrard, Mary D. *Artemesia Gentileschi Around 1622: the Shaping and
Reshaping of an Artistic Identity* (Berkley, 2001)
- Gibb, E.J.W. *A History of Ottoman Poetry* (London, 1900-1909)
- *Ottoman Poets*: translated into English verse in the original
forms, with introduction, biographical notices, and notes (London,
1882)
- Gibb, H.A.R. and H. Bowen *Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the
Impact of Western Civilisation on Moslem Culture in the Near East*
(Oxford, 1950)
- Gill, Catherine *Women in the Seventeenth-century Quaker Community: a
Literary Study of Political Identities, 1650-1700* (Aldershot, 2005)
- Gill, Pat 'Gender, Sexuality and Marriage', in Deborah Payne Fisk (ed.), *The
Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre* (Cambridge,
2000)
- Girouard, Mark *Hardwick Hall* (London, 1989)
- Goffman, Daniel *Britons in the Ottoman Empire 1642-1660* (London,
1998)
- Goodwin, Godfrey *The Private World of Ottoman Women* (London, 1997)
- Graham, Elspeth, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby and Helen Wilcox (eds), *Her
Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-century
Englishwomen* (London, 1989)
- Greer, Germaine *The Obstacle Race: the Fortunes of Women Painters and
Their Work* (London, 1979)
- Hackett, Helen "'Yet Tell Me Some Such Fiction": Lady Mary Wroth's Urania
and the "Femininity of Romance"', in Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss
(eds), *Women, Texts and Histories, 1575-1760* (London, 1992)
- Haigh, Christopher *Elizabeth I* (London, 1988)
- Hair, Paul *Before the Bawdy Court: Selections from Church Court and Other
Records Relating to the Correction of Moral Offences in England,
Scotland and New England, 1300-1800* (London, 1972)

- Hambly, Gavin 'Becoming Visible: Medieval Islamic Women in Historiography and History', in Gavin Hambly (ed.), *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage and Piety* (New York, 1998)
- Hanna, Nelly 'Marriage among Merchant Families in Seventeenth-century Cairo' in Amira El Azhary Sombol (ed.), *Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws in Islamic History* (Syracuse, 1996)
- Harris, J.R. and S.K. Gifford, *The Acts of Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* (London, 1890)
- Hathaway, Jane *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt : the Rise of the Qazdaglis* (Cambridge, 1997)
- Hayes, John *The Portrait in British Art: Masterpieces bought with the help of the National Art Collections Fund* (London, 1991)
- Heller, Nancy G. *Women Artists: An Illustrated History* (New York, 1987)
- Hill, Bridget 'Refuge from Men: The Idea of a Protestant Nunnery' in *Past and Present*, No. 117 (November, 1987)
- Hill, Christopher *Milton and the English Revolution* (London, 1977)
- *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (London, 1972)
- Hobby, Elaine *Virtue of Necessity, English Women's Writing, 1649-88* (London, 1988)
- Houlbrooke, Ralph A. *Church Courts and the People during the English Reformation: 1520-1570* (Oxford, 1979)
- *The English Family, 1450-1700* (New York, 1984)
- Hourani, Albert 'Islam and the Philosophers of History', in *Middle Eastern Studies*, iii (1967)
- Howe, Elizabeth *The First English Actresses: women and Drama: 1660-1700* (Cambridge, 1992)
- Imber, Colin 'Women, Marriage, and Property: *Mahr* in the Behcetü'l-Fetava of Yenişehirli Abdullah' in Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Middle East* (New York, 1997)
- Inalcik, Halil *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, Volume One, 1300-1600* (Cambridge, 1994)
- Ingram, Martin *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England 1570-1640*

- (Cambridge, 1987)
- Irwin, Robert *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies*
(London, 2006)
- Jacobs, Michael *The Painted Voyage: Art, Travel and Exploration, 1564-1875* (British Museum, London, 1995)
- Jennings, Ronald 'Women in Early 17-century Ottoman Judicial Records: The Shari'a Court of Anatolian Kaysari', in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 18 (1975)
- Jones, Norman *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation*
(Oxford, 2002)
- Kandiyoti, Deniz "Islam and Patriarchy: A Comparative Perspective" in Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (eds), *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender* (New York, 1991)
- Keeble, N.H. (ed.), *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman: A Reader* (London, 1994)
- Khoury, Dina Rizk 'Slippers at the Entrance of Behind Closed Doors: Domestic and Public Spaces for Mosuli Women' in Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Middle East* (New York, 1997)
- Kidwai, M.H. *Woman: Under Different Social and Religious Laws (Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam)* (New Delhi, 1976)
- Krody, Sumru Belger *Flowers of Silk and Gold: Four Centuries of Ottoman Embroidery* (London, Merrell in association with The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C, 2000)
- Laurence, Anne 'A Priesthood of She-believers: Women and Congregations in Mid-seventeenth Century England', in W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds), *Women in the Church* (Blackwell, 1990)
- *Women in England: 1500-1760: a Social History* (London, 1996)
- Levey, Michael *The World of Ottoman Art* (London, 1975)
- Lewis, Bernard *Islam and the West* (Oxford, 1993)
- *Islam in History; Ideas, Men and Events in the Middle East*
(London, 1973)
- Lewis, Raphaela *Everyday Life in Ottoman Turkey* (London, 1971)

- Lilley, Kate 'Blazing Worlds: Seventeenth-Century Women's Utopian Writing' in Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (eds), *Women, Texts and Histories, 1575-1760* (London, 1992)
- MacCaffrey, Wallace *Elizabeth I* (London, 1993)
- MacDonald, Michael and Murphy, Terence *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1993)
- Mack, Phyllis *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-century England* (Berkeley, 1992)
- MacLean, Gerald *Rise of Oriental Travel: English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580-1720* (Basingstoke, 2004)
- Manning, David 'Portraits and Social Class' in *The British Face: a View of Portraiture 1625-1850*, 19th February to 29th March 1986, catalogue edited and coordinated by Donald Garstang (London, 1986)
- Mansel, Philip *Constantinople, City of the World's Desire, 1453-1924* (London, 1995)
- Matar, Nabil 'The Representation of Muslim Women in Renaissance England' in *The Muslim World*, vol. 86, no. 1 (1996)
- *Islam in Britain, 1558-1685* (Cambridge, 1998)
- Mendelson, Sara Heller 'Stuart Women's Diaries and Occasional Memoirs' in Mary Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society 1500-1800* (Cambridge, 1986)
- *The Mental World of Stuart Women, Three Studies* (Brighton, 1987)
- Mendelson, Sara Heller and Patricia Crawford *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998)
- Menefee, Samuel Pyeatt *Wives for Sale: An Ethnographic Study of British Popular Divorce* (Oxford, 1981)
- Meriwether, Margaret L. and Judith E. Tucker (eds) *A Social History of Women and Gender in the Modern Middle East* (Waterview, 1999)
- Meriwether, Margaret L. *The Kin Who Count: Family and Society in Ottoman Aleppo, 1770-1840* (Texas, 1999)
- Mernissi, Fatima *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (London, 1985)
- *Women and Islam: an Historical and Theological Enquiry* (Oxford, 1991)

- Merriman, Roger Bigelow *Suleiman the Magnificent 1520-1566* (Cambridge, 1944)
- Metzger, B.M. and M.D. Coogan *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford, 1993)
- Micklewright, Nancy 'Musicians and Dancing Girls: Images of Women in Ottoman Miniature Painting' in Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the early modern Middle East* (New York, 1997)
- Miller, Barnette *Beyond the Sublime Porte: the Grand Seraglio of Stambul* (Yale, 1931)
- Morgan, Fidelis *The Female Wits: Women Playwrights on the London Stage 1660-1720* (London, 1981)
- Murad, Khurram *Shari'ah The Way of Justice* (The Islamic Foundation, 1981)
- Murray, Jacqueline 'The Absent Penitent: The Cure of Women's Souls and Confessors' Manuals in Thirteenth-Century England' in Lezley Smith and Jane H.M. Taylor (eds), *Women, the Book and the Godly: Selected Proceedings of the St. Hilda's Conference, 1993* (Cambridge, 1995)
- O'Day, Rosemary *Education and Society, 1500-1800: the Social Foundations of Education in Early Modern Britain* (London, 1982)
- Ortner, Sherry 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture', in Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (eds), *Women, Culture and Society* (California, 1974)
- Pagels, Elaine *The Gnostic Gospels* (London, 1980)
- Parker, Kenneth (ed.), *Early Modern Tales of Orient, a Critical Anthology* (London, 1999)
- Parker, Rozsika *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London, 1984)
- Patte, Daniel *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Philadelphia, 1987)
- Peirce, Leslie 'Beyond Harem Walls: Ottoman Royal Women and the Exercise of Power,' in D.O. Helly and S. M. Reverby, (eds), *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History: Essays from the Seventh Berkshire Conference on the History of Women* (Ithaca, 1992)

- *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (California, 2003)
 - 'Seniority, Sexuality and Social Order: The Vocabulary of Gender in Early Modern Ottoman Society' in Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire* (New York, 1997)
 - *The Imperial Harem, Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, 1993)
- Penzer, N.M. *The Harem, As it Existed in the Palace of the Turkish Sultans With a History of the Grand Seraglio from its Foundation to Modern Times* (London, 1965)
- Perrot, Michelle (ed.) *Writing Women's History* translated by Felicia Pheasant from an original idea by Alain Paire (Oxford, 1992)
- Plowden, Alison *The Stuart Princesses* (Stroud, 1996)
- Pointon, Marcia *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture, 1665-1800* (Oxford, 1997)
- Poole, Kristen ' "The Fittest Closet for all Goodness": Authorial Strategies of Jacobean Mother's Manuals', in *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, no. 35 (1995)
- Power, Eileen *Medieval English Nunneries, c. 1275-1535* (Cheshire, 1988?)
- Pryor, Felix *Elizabeth I, Her Life in Letters* (The British Library, 2003)
- Purkiss, Diane *Literature, gender and politics during the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 2005)
- 'Material Girls: The Seventeenth-Century Woman Debate', in Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (ed.), *Women, Texts and Histories, 1575-1760* (London, 1992)
- Quateart, Donald 'Recent Writings in Late Ottoman History' in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 35 no. 1 (Cambridge, February 2003)
- Reeve, C. *Mary Beale: Paintress 1633-1699* (London, 1999)
- Reiter, Rayna (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York, 1975)
- Reverby, Susan M. and Dorothy O. Helly *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History, Essays from the Seventh Berkshire Conference on the History of Women* (Cornell, 1992)

- Reynolds, Myra (ed.), *The Poems of Anne, Countess of Winchilsea* (Chicago, 1903)
- Richards, Judith M. 'The English Accession of James VI: 'National' Identity, Gender and the Personal Monarchy of England' in *English Historical Review*, cxvii, 472 (June, 2002)
- Riley-Smith, Jonathan *The Crusades: A Short History* (London, 1987)
- Roberts, Michael 'To bridle the falsehood of unconscionable workmen, and for her own satisfaction': what the Jacobean housewife needed to know about men's work, and why' in *Labour History Review*, 63.1 (Spring, 1998)
- Rogers, J.M. and R.M. Ward *Süleyman the Magnificent* (London, British Museum Publication, 1988)
- Roper, Lyndal *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford, 1989)
- Rosaldo, Michelle 'Women, Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview', in Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (eds), *Women, Culture and Society* (California, 1974)
- Seng, Yvonne J. 'Invisible Women: Residents of Early Sixteenth-century Istanbul' in Gavin R.G. Hambly (ed.), *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage and Piety* (New York, 1998)
- Sewell, William H. Jr. 'Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History' in *History and Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 2. (1967)
- Sharpe, J. A. *Early Modern England, A Social History, 1550-1760* (London, 1997)
- Shaukat Ali Zeenat *The Empowerment of Women in Islam, With Special Reference to Marriage and Divorce* (Mumbai, 1996)
- Shaw, Ezel Kural and C.J. Heywood *English and Continental Views of the Ottoman Empire: 1500-1800* (Los Angeles, 1972)
- Siegel, Paul N. 'Milton and the Humanist Attitude Toward Women' in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 11, no. 1 (January, 1950)
- Silay, Kemal "'Singing His Words": Ottoman Women Poets and the Power of Patriarchy' in Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Middle East* (New York, 1997)

- Slatkin, Wendy *Women Artists in History* (London, 2001)
- Smuts, Malcolm 'The Puritan Followers of Henrietta Maria in the 1630s',
in *English History Review*, 93 (1978)
- Spufford, Margaret *Contrasting Communities, English Villagers in the
Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974)
- Spurr, John *England in the 1670s: this Masquerading Age* (Oxford, 2000)
- Stetson, Dorothy M. *A Woman's Issue: the Politics of Family Law Reform in
England* (Westport, 1982)
- Stone, Lawrence *Broken Lives: Separation and Divorce in England, 1660-
1857* (Oxford, 1993)
- *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1977)
 - *Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987* (Oxford, 1990)
 - (ed.), *Schooling and society: Studies in the History of Education*
(London, 1977)
 - *Uncertain Unions: Marriage in England 1660-1753* (Oxford, 1992)
- Strong, Roy *Artists of the Tudor Court: the Portrait Miniature Rediscovered
1520-1620* (London, 1983)
- *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry*
(London, 1977)
 - *The English Renaissance Miniature* (London, 1983)
- Summers, Montague *The Works of Aphra Behn*, 6 vols (1915; rpt. New York,
1967)
- Talley, M.K. *Portrait Painting in England: Studies in the Technical Literature
Before 1700* (Paul Mellon Centre, 1981)
- Tarver, Anne *Church Court Records: an Introduction for Family and Social
Historians* (Chichester, 1994)
- Taylor, Roderick *Ottoman Embroidery* (London, 1993)
- Thomas, Keith *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs
in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-century England* (Harmondsworth, 1973)
- Thompson, Sally *Women Religious: the Founding of English Nunneries After
the Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1991)
- Tittler, Robert *The Reign of Mary I* (London, 1983)
- Traub, Valerie 'Gender and Sexuality in Shakespeare', in Margreta de Grazia

- and Stanley Wells (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare* (Cambridge, 2001)
- Travitsky, Betty *The Paradise of Women: Writings by Englishwomen of the Renaissance* (New York, 1989)
- Tucker, Judith E. *In the House of the Law: Gender and Islamic Law in Ottoman Syria and Palestine* (Berkeley, 1998)
- Ugur, Derman M. 'The Ottoman Calligraphy', in Kemal Çiçek, Erjüment Kuran, Nejat Göyüng, ilber Ortaylı (eds), *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, vol 4, *Culture and Arts* (Yeni Türkiye, 2000)
- Üngör, Ethem Ruhi 'The Turkish Music and Instruments in the Ottoman State' in Kemal Çiçek, Erjüment Kuran, Nejat Göyüng, ilber Ortaylı (eds), *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, vol. 4, *Culture and Arts* (Yeni Türkiye, 2000)
- Uslu, Recep 'Musicians in the Ottoman Empire and Central Asia in the 15th century according to an Unknown Work of Aydınlı Semseddin Nahifi' in Kemal Çiçek, Erjüment Kuran, Nejat Göyüng, ilber Ortaylı (ed.), *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, vol. 4, *Culture and Arts* (Yeni Türkiye, 2000)
- Venarde, Bruce L. *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890-1215* (London, 1999)
- Vitkus, Daniel 'Early Modern Orientalism: Representations of Islam in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Europe' in David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto (eds), *Western View of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe,, Perception of Other* (New York, 1999)
- *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England* (New York, 2000)
- Warner, Marina *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London, 2000)
- Wayne, Valerie 'The Death of the Author: Anonymity's Allies and Swethnam the Woman-hater' in Susan Frye and Karen Robertson (eds), *Maids and Mistresses, Courtiers and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999)
- Weber, Harold *The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations of Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-century England* (Wisconsin, 1986)
- Webster C. *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform, 1626-*

- 1660 (London, 1975)
- Willen, Diane 'Women in the Public Sphere in Early Modern England: the Case of the Urban Working Poor' in Dorothy O. Helly and Susan M. Reverby *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's history: Essays from the Seventh Berkshire Conference on the History of Women* (Cornell, 1992)
- Witherington, Ben *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge, 1988)
- Yeazell, Ruth Bernard *Harems of the Mind: Passages of Western Art and Literature* (London, 2000)
- Yenişehirlioglu, Filiz 'The Ideology of the Sultanate and Ottoman Art', in Kemal Çiçek, Erjument Kuran, Nejat Göyüng, ilber Ortaylı (eds), *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, vol. 4, *Culture and Arts* (Yeni Türkiye, 2000)
- Yermolenko, Galina 'Roxolana: "The Grestest Empresse of the East" ', in *The Muslim World*, Volume 95, issue 2 (April, 2005)
- Zarinebaf-Shahr, Fariba 'Women and the Public Eye in Eighteenth-century Istanbul' in Gavin R.G. Hambly (ed.), *Women in the Medieval Islamic World* (New York, 1998)
- 'Women, Law and Imperial Justice in Ottoman Istanbul in the Late Seventeenth Century', in Amira El Azhary Sombol (ed.), *Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws in Islamic History* (Syracuse, 1996)
- Zilfi, Madeline C. "'We Don't Get Along": Women and *Hul* Divorce in the Eighteenth Century' in Madeline C. Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Middle East* (New York, 1997)
- 'Women and Society in the 'Tulip era'', in Amira El Azhary Sombol (ed.), *Women, the Family and Divorce Laws in Islamic History* (Syracuse, 1996)
- Zurcher, Amelia *Dancing on a Net": Representation in Lady Mary Wroth's Urania*, unpublished M.Phil. thesis, Oxford University (1989)

Internet Resources:-

Ballaster, Ros 'Manley, Delarivier (c.1670–1724)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17939> , accessed 2 Nov 2006

'Bukhari, al' *Encyclopædia Britannica* 2007, *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, 10 Dec 2007, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/artic>

Chibnall, Marjorie 'Matilda (1102–1167)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18338> , accessed 25 June 2007

Collinson, Patrick 'Elizabeth I (1533–1603)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2007
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8636>, accessed 10 Aug 2007

Corns, Thomas N. 'Channel, Elinor (fl. 1654)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/69784> , accessed 29 Sept 2006

Ellison, James 'Sandys, George (1578–1644)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24651>

Farrant, John H. 'Dallaway, James (1763–1834)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2005
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7040>, accessed 10 Aug 2007

Fuller, Sophie 'Thicknesse , Ann (1737–1824)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27179>, accessed 30 Aug 2007

Gerrard, Christine 'Hill, Aaron (1685–1750)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13264>, accessed 1 Sept 2006

Graham, Elspeth 'Sowernam, Ester (fl. 1617)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/46922> , accessed 6 Oct 2006

Gregg, Edward 'Anne (1665–1714)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/560>, accessed 10 Aug 2007.

Hamilton, Alastair 'Bedwell, William (bap. 1563, d. 1632)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1942> , accessed 6 Oct 2006

Lewalski, Barbara K. 'Speght , Rachel (b. 1597?)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/45825> , accessed 6 Oct 2006

Mendelson, Sara H. 'Rich , Mary, countess of Warwick (1624–1678)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23487>, accessed 9 Aug 2007

O'Connor, Mary E. 'Dormer , Anne (1648?–1695)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/66726> , accessed 9 Aug 2007

O'Malley, Susan Gushee 'Munda, Constantia (fl. 1617)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/46913> , accessed 6 Oct 2006

Prescott, Anne Lake 'Anger, Jane (fl. 1588)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39675> , accessed 6 Oct 2006

Roberts, Peter R. 'Parry, Blanche (c.1508–1590)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/65989>, accessed 13 Aug 2007

Schnorrenberg, Barbara Brandon 'Delany , Mary (1700–1788)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2005 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7442>, accessed 30 Aug 2007

Speck, W.A. 'Mary II (1662–1694)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2007
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18246>, accessed 10 Aug 2007

Spence, Richard T. 'Clifford, Anne , countess of Pembroke, Dorset, and Montgomery (1590–1676)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5641>, accessed 9 Aug 2007

Weikel, Ann 'Mary I (1516–1558)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18245>, accessed 10 Aug 2007

Wyman H. Herendeen, 'Camden, William (1551–1623)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4431> , accessed 2 Dec 2006

Zilfi, Madeline (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*, Review author, Palmira Brummett, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (May, 1999), pp. 304-307
<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00207438%28199905%2931%3A2%3C304%3AWITOEM%3E2.0.CO%3B2-R>